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# **LIVING WITH TRAUMATIC BEREAVEMENT: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

Submitted to the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling  
and Middlesex University Psychology Department in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy

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February 2016, London, United Kingdom

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Mom and Dad, thank you for your unending love, patience and support. To my brother, Rajinda, thank you for your confidence in me and for being my motivation to do well. Robin, I could not have done this without your support, humour, and kindness. Thank you for keeping the Bat signal strong.

Finally, my utmost gratitude goes to the participants of this study for sharing their experience of traumatic bereavement with me. I dedicate this project to them and to the memory of their loved ones.

# Abstract

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This dissertation explores the lived experience of traumatic bereavement in adults between the ages of 21 and 50. The term traumatic bereavement refers to a specific type of bereavement where the loss is unexpected (without forewarning), untimely, and often (but not always) associated with horrific or frightening circumstances. The study sought to identify common existential themes underlying the experience, and therefore did not restrict itself to investigating a particular mode of death. A total of 7 traumatically bereaved individuals (6 females and 1 male) were interviewed using semi-structured interviews, and the data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 1999). Three superordinate themes were identified. The first theme pertained to traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience, the second to traumatic bereavement leading to a grappling with meaning, and the third, traumatic bereavement having a significant relational component. Participants are seen to experience a transformation that transcends post traumatic growth. Findings are discussed in light of existing literature and are framed by existential thought. Given the emerging importance of meaning-making, a meaning-making model specific to traumatic bereavement is proposed. Finally, this dissertation makes suggestions for a clinical approach to working with traumatically bereaved adults.

**Key words:** *existential counselling psychology, interpretative phenomenological analysis, traumatic bereavement, trauma, bereavement*

## **Statement of authorship**

This dissertation is written by Aindri Jayasinghe and has been granted ethical clearance from the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctor of Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. The author reports no conflicts of interest and is solely responsible for the content and writing of the dissertation.

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## Abbreviations:

APA: American Psychiatric Association

CG: Complicated Grief

DSM: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

MDD: Major Depressive Disorder

PGD: Prolonged Grief Disorder

PTG: Post Traumatic Growth

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

## Anonymisation and transcript conventions:

All names are aliases

[...] material omitted

... pause

[favourite genre] additional material or my summary

# Introduction

---

The loss of a loved one is thought to be one of the most painful experiences that a human being can suffer (Bowlby, 1980). It is also an experience that all human beings are likely to endure at some point in their life, making it a topic of great existential importance. While all bereavement might be seen to be traumatic, this research is concerned with traumatic bereavement. The term traumatic bereavement refers to a specific type of bereavement where the loss is unexpected (without forewarning), untimely, and often (but not always) associated with horrific or frightening circumstances. This topic was chosen owing to a dearth of existential phenomenological research in the area. It attempts to improve knowledge on traumatic bereavement, with a view to developing an existential phenomenological counseling psychology approach to clinical practice. It is undertaken with a view to improving psychological services in order to promote the well-being of the traumatically bereaved.

In addition to its existential importance, this topic was also chosen because of its high prevalence. According to Pearlman et al. (2014), the largest group of people who die between the ages of 1–44 do so as a result of sudden, traumatic events. Of these deaths, road traffic accidents are reported to be the most common. Between the ages of 15-34, homicide and suicide are the most prevalent causes of death, along with accidents. Sudden deaths also occur after the age of 44. In these instances, the most common causes include acute natural events such as brain aneurysm or cardiac arrest.

The literature on bereavement is vast; there exists several theories, each suggesting a different conceptualization and approach to clinical practice. The

literature included in this review was selected with the intention of showing the chronological development of the most dominant theories and perspectives within the field.

Traditionally, traumatology and thanatology existed as separate fields despite their conceptual, clinical, and often empirical relationship (Rando, 1997). More recently, there has been debate about the relationship between trauma and grief (Horowitz, 2003; Kaufmann, 2002; Neimeyer, 2007) but it is generally recognized that a traumatically bereaved individual may experience joint manifestations of both (Jacobs, 1999). Consequently, Pearlman et al., (2014) argue the importance of an integrated treatment approach to traumatic bereavement. In line with this idea, an existential perspective would not look to separate psychological processes such as trauma and grief but would instead seek to understand the overall impact of traumatic bereavement on an individual's ontology, which would be investigated through the use of phenomenology (the study of conscious experience). The individual's ontology may be mapped out on what is known as the '4 worlds model' (van Deurzen, 2002) which includes understanding their personal, physical, social, and spiritual dimensions of existence.

There also exists debate within the field about whether the experience of traumatic bereavement leads to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (Van de Kolk, 1996) or Complicated Grief (Prigerson et al., 1995; Prigerson et al., 2009; Rando, 1993).

The research asks the question 'how can the experience of traumatic bereavement be understood from an existential perspective?' That is, it

endeavours to investigate the central question, framing its findings, where appropriate, within an existential framework. It will begin with a review of the literature around bereavement and trace its development over the years. The next section will involve an in-depth engagement with research methodology, covering ontology, epistemology, methodology, and method. Such an in-depth engagement is particularly important given the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a method, and its emphasis on careful interpretation and reflexivity. The method section will also describe in detail the way the research was carried out.

The results section will follow, where data collected from participants will be reported, once again in great detail to illustrate how emerging themes were identified and grouped together and the discussion chapter will discuss the results in light of the literature from the literature review. Finally, the conclusion will address the implications of the findings on clinical practice, particularly counselling psychology, and make recommendations for future research.

## Literature Review

---

# 1 Psychoanalytic models of traumatic bereavement

## 1.1 Freud's Standard Model

'Love is a sickness full of woes,

All remedies refusing...'

Samuel Daniel

Western bereavement theories originated with Freud's Standard Model of Bereavement. Based on his seminal paper '*Mourning and Melancholia*' (Freud, 1917), he described the response to bereavement as similar to that of depression, or what he called 'Major Affective Disorder'. Mourning was characterized by a mood of emotional pain and a diminished ability to experience pleasure in life. The emotional pain of bereavement, he said, resulted from a build-up of energy/libido which could not be discharged through interaction with the lost object since that object was no longer physically there. The diminished ability to experience pleasure could be explained by the majority of psychic energy being used up to work through grief (Freud, 1917). Grieving was thus an intra-psychic process of incremental divestment of libido from the lost object (the deceased) through a process called decathexis. It involved reviewing thoughts and memories of the deceased (hypercathexis), which allowed for the gradual surrender and eventual detachment from one's psychological attachment to the lost person. Recovery saw the redirection of libido, known as recathexis, to other relationships and pursuits, thereby releasing the cause of pain and allowing the bereaved person to re-engage in life and experience pleasure.

## 1.2 Freud's Theory of Mourning: a critique

Freud's Theory of Mourning (Freud, 1917) was influenced by his topographical model of the mind (Freud, 1900) which conceived of an intra-psychic system with three compartments - the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious – each of which were thought to be responsible for separate psychological processes. This meant that mourning was seen to be an entirely private process that takes place within the psyche, relying solely on the investment and divestment of psychic energy. This is problematic from an existential perspective since an existential approach would not conceive of a mind or a 'psyche' which exists as an entity in and of itself, but rather a sense of self which emerges in relation to the world and others (Cohn, 1997; Spinelli, 2006). As Barnett (2009) points out, Heidegger's (1927) definition of Being-in-the-world, illustrates through the use of hyphens his point that 'Being', 'in', and 'world' cannot be separated, thus emphasizing the way that we are always in relation. Hogg et al. (1995, pg. 258) stress the importance of relationship to others by stating that the '...self is a product of social interaction, in that people come to know who they are through their interactions with others...' On this basis, an existential perspective would argue that Freud's theory of mourning fails to recognise the importance of the relational aspect of human experience. An existential view also assumes that the self is always changing since it continually interacts and engages with the world around it. The self is therefore never complete but is instead always in a state of becoming (Sartre, 1943a). The idea then, that an individual would complete the process of mourning and return to their previous manner of functioning does not fit with an existential view of human Being.



The emphasis of this model on decathexis is also incongruent with current perspectives. There is a growing body of literature (discussed in more detail later) that supports the existence and the importance of what is called continuing bonds (Bowlby, 1980), a sense of presence (Steffen & Coyle, 2012), or lasting love (Attig, in Neimeyer 2010) which stands in stark opposition to the goal of decathexis. In a review of the literature, Malkinson (2010) concluded that studies have not only failed to find support for the theory of breaking down attachments to the loved one, but have found that continued inner relationships are beneficial to the bereaved individual.

However despite the aforementioned limitations, these early writings contributed significantly to the development of early models of bereavement, which are generally referred to as the Standard Psychoanalytic Model of Mourning (Hagman, 1995b).

### **1.3 The Standard model of mourning: Stage Models of Grief**

Influenced by Freud's psychodynamic theory (Freud, 1917) and his own attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; 1973), Bowlby (1980) put forward a theory of mourning. In his attachment theory, he made the assertion that 'instinctive affectional bonds' or 'attachments' formed between child and mother/caregiver because of a need for safety and security, and that this explained why powerful attachment behaviours such as crying were activated when these bonds were threatened. He (Bowlby, 1980) believed, too, that the relationship between child and mother/caregiver has a major impact on subsequent relationships, and that an individual's particular attachment style will therefore influence how (s)he reacts to the loss of a loved one. This was his main point of departure from Freud's (1917) theory since he made the assertion that the biological function

of behaviours that manifested in response to bereavement was proximity/reunion with the loved one rather than withdrawal (decathexis). With this development in the model, Bowlby (1980) steered the focus away from solely intra-psychic grief work and introduced the importance of the relational aspect of moving through grief. It was also a significant development in bereavement theory since it provided a framework for understanding individual differences in response to loss.

According to Bowlby (1980), the bereaved person struggled with a conflict between activated attachment behaviours and the reality that the loved one is no longer physically present for that behaviour to have its intended effect. In order to deal with these contradictory forces, the bereaved individual was thought to go through four specific and identifiable stages of grieving. Bowlby and Parkes (1970) put forward the Four Stages of Grief Model, which included initial numbness/disbelief/shock, yearning/searching for the lost person accompanied by anger, depression and hopelessness, re-organization or recovery as the loss is accepted, and finally a return to former interests. With the introduction of this model, several theorists began to propose further stage models of grieving (see, e.g., Horowitz, 1976; Ramsay & Hapsee, 1977; Sanders, 1989), with arguably one of the most influential being that of Kubler-Ross' (1969) from her book *On Death and Dying* (initially a model of how people respond to their own impending deaths, but later used to understand the mourning process). While there is variation between these models of mourning, shared characteristics can be identified to give an overall picture of the standard model. According to this model, the bereaved individual is thought to experience a predominant mood of pain, loss of interest in the outside world,

pre-occupation with memories of the lost object, and a diminished capacity to create new bonds. Recovery involves the restoration of psychic equilibrium, adaptation to the loss, and a renewed capacity to experience pleasure.

#### **1.4 The Standard Model of Mourning: a critique**

Neimeyer (2010) states that research has on the whole failed to identify a universal pattern of mourning, and many studies have produced findings that do not support stage models (Barrett & Schneweis, 1980-1981; Holland & Neimeyer, 2010). The introduction of the Grief Wheel (Goodall, Drage, & Bell, 1994) was developed in response to these criticisms, proposing a model in which there are no clear boundaries between the stages of grief but that the lines between stages were now considered to be blurred, and progression was no longer expected to be linear. However even with these adaptations, the Standard Model of Mourning has led to the realisation that fixed stage models fail to reflect experience since few people actually pass through the stages in the expected fashion (see Archer, 1999, or Attig, 1996, for a review). This led to the view that the idea of fixed stages is unhelpful (Stroebe et al., 2001).

Existential perspectives generally seek to understand the subjective experience of the individual by paying attention to the unique context in which they find themselves. The delineation of stages which apply to all individuals would therefore be viewed as undermining the highly subjective nature of experience and neglecting the multiplicity of responses an individual might have following traumatic bereavement. Since any divergence from the model is seen as a divergence from the norm, an existential perspective would also support the criticism directed towards the Standard Model with respect to the way that it creates ideas about pathological and non-pathological grief (Neimeyer, 1998).

For instance, the expectation that bereavement is predominantly painful and sad has meant that the role of positive emotions following loss has often been overlooked (Hagman in Neimeyer, 2010), viewed as inappropriate (Fredrickson, Tugade, Waugh, & Larkin, 2003) or seen as indicative of denial (Deutsch, 1937; Sanders, 1993; see Keltner & Bonanno, 1997, for a review). Evidence suggests, however, that positive emotions are not only prevalent during bereavement (Folkman, 1997a, 2001; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000) but are also important in resolving grief (Keltner & Bonanno, 1997). Thus in addition to pathologizing responses which need not be pathologized, stage models may also fail to recognize other important aspects of grief which may facilitate the mourning process. On the whole, an existential perspective would take a far less rigid approach, avoiding the pathologizing of individual responses, remaining open to all that emerges and viewing any psychological disturbance as problems in living (van Deurzen-Smith in Dryden, 2006).

Stage models are also criticized for placing the individual in a passive role (Neimeyer, 1998). An existentially informed approach to bereavement would certainly contest the idea that the bereaved individual is simply at the mercy of their loss and must move through a sequence of psychological transitions before they can regain their ability to exert themselves in the world. Rather than a passive movement through stages or phases, such an approach would more likely encourage engagement with the deeply existential issues arising from loss such as finitude, temporality, mortality, isolation, meaninglessness, freedom, responsibility, and anxiety.

## 2 Cognitive models of traumatic bereavement

### 2.1 Cognitive Information Processing Models

Separation: Your absence has gone through me

Like thread through a needle

Everything I do is stitched with its color.”

W. S. Merwin

Cognitive information processing models are based on psychodynamic theory and assert that the problem of coping with the impact of loss is the resolution of conflicting information (Horowitz, 1976). This idea was developed predominantly through Assumptive World Models (eg. Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kauffman 2002) and the Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut (2007), marking a turn towards the importance of meaning making processes following bereavement.

#### 2.1.1 Shattered World Assumptions Theory

The assumptive world (Parkes, 1988) refers to an organised schema reflecting all that an individual holds to be true about the world and the self. Janoff-Bulman (1992) asserts that the nature of these assumptions is based on the basic valuations that the world is benevolent, events in the world are meaningful, and the self is worthy. Given these assumptions, sudden, traumatic events can shatter the individual's assumption of safety in the world, making it appear to be dangerous, unpredictable, or unjust (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Traumatic bereavement, for instance, might call these assumptions into question since the event (loss) no longer fits with old schemas/assumptions about the safety of the

world. That is, previous illusions of safety are shattered. With a loss of assumptive world comes a loss of meaning and coherence, and the bereaved individual then needs to alter old schemas and re-build new cognitive perspectives which incorporate the loss, in order to begin to re-establish a meaningful life (Janoff-Bulman, 1998).

### 2.1.2 Assumptive World Theory

According to Kaufmann's (2002) Assumptive World Theory, new information is in opposition to previously held assumptions, and result in a loss of the previously held assumptive world. Kaufmann (2002), however, develops the model by stating that the difference between traumatic and non-traumatic bereavement is the *nature* of the experience rather than the event itself. For him, the loss of assumptive world violates, shatters, and fragments the self, overwhelming it with negative assumptions. This disruption evokes feelings of shame, helplessness, panic, and dissociative processes, indicating a loss of safety. He states that traumatic loss is thought to 'shatter[s] or fragment[s] the self and violently break[s] it into pieces' (Kauffman, 2002, pg. 205), where the greater the extent of fragmentation the greater the experience of traumatization. He asserts that although there is a loss of the assumptive world in both traumatic and non-traumatic loss, the difference between them is the psychological impact of the experience, where traumatic bereavement is thought to be particularly violating to the self. Thus the key difference in this model compared to Janoff-Bulman (1992) is the explicit emphasis on the ensuing feelings of helplessness and a loss of safety which are equated with a loss of self.

### 2.1.3 Loss of world order: an existential perspective

Heidegger (1927) can offer insight into an existential perspective on the loss of world order. His philosophy uses the term 'Dasein', meaning 'being there', to capture the distinctive nature of human Being-in-the-world. This characteristic of 'being there' is not spatial, but as Barnett (2009) says, describes a sort of dwelling. An ontological characteristic - or *existentiale* - of Dasein is Sorge, or Care. Dasein Cares in that it is concerned with its relationship to objects, other Daseins, its life, its possibilities, and its death. What enables Dasein to perceive its world is his 'disclosedness', or its character of having 'been laid open' (Heidegger, 1962, pg. 105). Heidegger (1927) states that we cannot at all times live with the degree of existential anxiety that would come with the full awareness of the existential givens of existence (e.g. our mortality), and so in order to survive psychologically we live in a state of 'inauthenticity'. Barnett (2009) points out that this reference to Dasein's ontological openness both to his Being and the world can say something about the capacity to open up and disclose the world and itself, to itself. For instance we may turn away from our finitude by shifting our focus to the 'They', thinking of death in general rather than really grasping its 'mineness' (Heidegger, 1927, pg.284). That is, we are not always in full awareness of our inevitable death. Often, the question of being arises when we are taken away from this safety, or this 'inauthentic' mode of being, for example following traumatic bereavement. Barnett (2009) argues that events such as traumatic bereavement bring existential anxiety to our awareness, causing what Heidegger calls 'unheimlich' or the feeling of being 'not-at-home-like' (Heidegger, 1927). It makes us aware of our finitude and

‘thrownness’ (the situation we find ourselves in) and thus throws us into an authentic Being-towards-death.

Similar to such a loss of world order, Stolorow (2007) integrates psychodynamic theory with existential philosophy to argue that we cling to a ‘system of everyday significance’ that provides us with structure, meaning, and safety (Stolorow, 2007). This structure of everyday significance that we take for granted can no longer be upheld when traumatic bereavement occurs, and we are faced with the world in a wholly different way. Thus trauma is characterized by a collapse of meaning.

## 2.2 The Dual Process Model

The Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut, 2007) brings into focus the importance of cognitive processes. It stresses the importance of understanding the types of cognitions bereaved individuals have, what meanings are attached to the loss, and how they change over time to enable coming to terms with it. Specifically, it attempts to address the question of *how* meaning is made within a bereavement-specific model of coping, and focuses on the cognitive processes of confrontation and avoidance, the positive or negative valence of emotion, and their effects on coping with loss.

According to The Dual Process model, grief work does not involve focusing solely on the loss, but instead recovery from bereavement is characterized by two processes. These are ‘restoration orientation’ (responses involved in adjusting to daily life and developing a new identity), and ‘loss orientation’ (focusing on the loss itself). It is suggested that ‘coming to terms with death is a process that works best if it is grappled with, set aside, and re-visited’ (Shear,



2010, pg.364). An individual can only be involved in one of these processes at a time but both are necessary, and although restoration processes generally replenish hope and energy, both can instigate stress and anxiety.

The model also describes a third orientation during which the bereaved individual is not focusing on either restoration or the loss, but is instead engaging in unrelated activities. The model argues that the feelings and reactions to bereavement depend on meanings assigned to the loss and that generally, the extent to which a person adjusts to their loss depends on the extent to which positive feelings can be associated with it (Stroebe & Schut, 2007).

### **2.2.1 Cognitive information processing models: a critique**

Having developed out of psychodynamic theory, cognitive information processing models rely on the concept of the mind or self as an entity 'with substance and structure' (Cannon, 1991, pg. 38) which can fragment into several pieces following traumatic loss. This is immediately problematic from an existential perspective since the self is not viewed as an objective entity which can shatter but is instead understood as emerging in relation to the world and others (Cohn, 1997; Spinelli, 2006). Shattered World Assumptions models retain the psychodynamic concept of an unconscious, stating that traumatic reality is brought to the individual's awareness in the wake of traumatic loss. While the idea of an unconscious psychic locality is at odds with an existential perspective, existential thinkers would not deny that there exist states of awareness and unawareness. The difference is that both are simply understood as aspects of consciousness (Cohn, 1997). Sartre (1943a) describes

consciousness as an openness to Being that is without compartments and spheres, referring to what is in our awareness as 'reflective' consciousness, and what is outside of our awareness as 'pre-reflective' (Sartre, 1943a).

Furthermore, the anxiety response to traumatic bereavement would be understood in a wholly different way by an existential perspective. An existential perspective would not view anxiety as a 'cognitive disintegration' (Janoff-Bulman, 1992, pg. 65) but as '...a fundamental mood of existence, always there but which we often seek to evade' (Barnett, 2009, pg. 12). Recall, it is events such as traumatic bereavement that can jolt an individual out of an inauthentic mode of Being and this new awareness, although anxiety-provoking, can lead to the individual living a more full and meaningful life. Such a perspective is also offered by Yalom (1980), who argues that the problem of meaning arises from awareness of the existential givens and that engagement with these will have implications for coping with traumatic events. It is for this reason that he asserts that 'though the physicality of death destroys us, the idea of death may save us' (Yalom, 2011, pg. 7). He argues that a confrontation with our mortality, although anxiety-provoking, can provide an impetus to live more completely and fully, with an increased 'mindfulness of being'. Through an awareness of our freedom, we may realize our ability to choose how to bear our suffering. An existential-phenomenological counselling psychology perspective would therefore involve allowing and encouraging clients to sit with their anxiety and reflect on the randomness of the world and its occasional malevolence. Through this, the individual might reach beyond their usual horizon to discover greater vitality and a richer, more meaningful existence (Barnett, 2009).

Paidoussis (2012) questions the shattered world assumptions model over its assertion that there is an objective world which is malevolent and meaningless and which all individuals will become aware of following traumatic loss. From an existential perspective there is no real or objective world to be discovered but instead only an interpreted world (Spinelli, 2005) that emerges through our direct and practical engagement with it. She points to the differences between cognitive approaches and existential approaches in understanding traumatic bereavement highlighting - in addition to an existential view of the self as dynamic rather than fixed and the world as interpreted rather than objective – that meaning emerges in a subjective way as the individual reflects on his loss and its impact.

Another key issue arising from cognitive information processing models is the emphasis on cognitive processes alone, since there is evidence outside of bereavement literature which suggests that separate emotional and cognitive systems exist where the emotional system may operate at a pre-conscious level (Greeneberg & Paivio, 1997). Denzin (1984) argues that emotions can be experienced both at a conscious and pre-conscious level, suggesting then that focusing only on what is thought about, or cognitive, may suggest that other important areas of experience are being neglected. Certainly from an existential perspective, reappraisal following traumatic bereavement ‘...would not simply be cognitive: it would be a new embodied way of apprehending the world and being addressed by it, a new way of Being-in-the-world physically-emotionally-cognitively-spiritually’ (Barnett, 2009, pg. 32). Attig (2002) also argues against the idea that the loss of the assumptive world following traumatic bereavement is predominantly cognitive. He asserts that more than purely an adjustment of

explicitly held beliefs and interpretations of the world must take place following traumatic loss. He points out that when we assume, there is something 'fundamentally deeper... prior to thought' (Attig in Kauffman, 2002, pg. 57) or beneath thoughtful awareness which is involved. This is supported through the knowledge that much learning is pre-verbal, particularly during the early stages of life but also through our experiences of being in the world thereafter. He posits that learning is expressed in the way that we interact with the world and others and is held in our dispositions and habits: neither of which are necessarily reflected upon. Our learning, he argues, is developed and given expression to through our practical engagement with the world and thus we adopt ways of living within 'non-cognitive, emotional, psychological, physical, behavioural, social, soulful, and spiritual forces and contexts' (Attig in Kaufmann, 2002, pg.60). It is all of these dimensions that are undermined through traumatic bereavement and loss of the assumptive world. Coping with bereavement involves 'taking in that loss in the depths of our being, allowing ourselves to feel the impact of the absence in all dimensions of our lives...' (Attig in Kauffman, 2002, pg. 64).

### **3 Cognitive Constructivist Theories**

'Grieving entails no less than relearning the world.' – Anna Aragno

Constructivism is a post-modern approach to psychology that emphasizes the importance of constructing a self-narrative to impose meaning on life experiences (Niemeyer, 2009). Constructivist approaches assert that we come

to know ourselves and our world through the stories we tell (Niemeyer, 1993) and that the way that we confer meaning on the past gives direction to the future (Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). Cognitive constructivist approaches adopt a position of epistemological humility in that they place importance on the individual's construction of the world and the meanings assigned to it, over the status of external reality (Niemeyer, 2010). While they maintain a belief in an objective real world 'out there', it is less of a concern than the individual's construction of it.

Constructive and narrative therapies hold the view that the telling of one's story has therapeutic value in and of itself. According to these approaches we are thought to construct a sense of self through the narrative of various events that occur through our lives, through what is known as the self-narrative. The self-narrative is defined as

"... an overarching cognitive-affective-behavioural structure that organizes the 'micro-narratives of everyday life into a 'macro-narrative' that consolidates our self-understanding, establishes our characteristic range of emotion and goals, and guides our performance on the stage of the social world" (Niemeyer, 2004b, pg.53-54).

Constructivist theories (including narrative approaches) hold that traumatic bereavement challenges one's old assumptive world (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), sense of narrative coherence, and sense of identity (Niemeyer 1998), thus undermining the individual's broad sense of meaning and coherence (Niemeyer et al., 2006a). The goal of grief work is thus the redevelopment of a coherent self-narrative that integrates traumatic events. It involves attempting to resolve

the incongruence between one's previous sense of meaning and the sense of meaninglessness which arises following traumatic loss. Creating an account of the traumatic event that can be integrated into one's life story can help bereaved individuals to do this and thus establish meaning and coherence (Currier & Neimeyer, 2006). It facilitates understanding one's new identity and adjustment to the changes resulting from the loss (Harvey et al., 2007). The ability to reorganize one's life story, however, is recognised as being especially difficult following trauma (Sewell, 1996).

Cognitive constructivist approaches emphasize the 'linguistic-relational', acknowledging not only the importance of stories but also the relational basis of selfhood. We are believed to find affirmation for our self-narratives through the responses of significant others (Niemeyer, 2010). When significant others are no longer physically present to respond, they are given symbolic significance in the new self-narrative and identity. Of course the relational basis of selfhood and the relationality of grief extends beyond the relationship to the deceased, pointing to the importance of the social dimension and the role of the therapist as a 'validating agent' (Landfield, 1988) in the construction of the new narrative.

### **3.1 Cognitive Constructivist Theories: A Critique**

Constructivist theories appear to be similar in many respects to existential perspectives. The 'relational self' (Niemeyer, 2010) and its incorporation of a personal and public language in the self-narrative also lends itself to the view that the self is continually evolving through our interaction and engagement with the world and others (Gergen, 1991; Niemeyer, 1998), thus falling in line with

existential thinking and challenging the traditional view of the self as singular, static, and fully knowable.

In further alignment with existential approaches, cognitive constructivists also place emphasis on meaning making. They move beyond cognitive information processing models in their acknowledgement that meaning making involves explicit reorganization of narratives as well as some reorganization at the implicit level. They acknowledge that meanings are anchored not only within language and in a cultural context, but also in a personal-agentive (Mascolo, Craig-Bray & Niemeyer, 1997) that is partly pre-symbolic (Niemeyer, 2010). This means that self-narratives are based upon lived discriminations that are tacit, pre-reflective and incompletely articulated in symbolic speech (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). However, while the implicit level is acknowledged by constructivists, the emphasis still remains with cognitive processes.

### **3.2 Traumatic bereavement and the search for meaning**

*‘There is only one thing that I dread: not to be worthy of my sufferings’*

*Dostoevsky*

What begins to emerge through the development of theory is a growing recognition of the need for meaning following traumatic bereavement (Lehman et al, 1987; McIntosh et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 2003). It currently makes up a significant subsection of the literature (cf. Niemeyer, 2001a). It is generally felt that major loss shatters one’s assumptive world (Janof-Bulman, 1992; Kaufmann, 2002) leading to a search for meaning in which the goal is to integrate the loss into one’s meaning system, assumptive world, or self-narrative (Niemeyer, 2001b).

Meaning, however, can be made at different levels and may manifest or be understood in different ways. It may for instance refer to a sense of life having a structure and/or having an understanding of one's role in life. This aspect of meaning rests on the assumptions we make, for instance around safety, control and justice (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). It may also involve a search for a broader sense of meaning (Downey, Silver & Wortman, 1990; Schwartzberg & Janoff-Bulman, 1991; Landsman, 1993). Davis (2010) refers to this as existential meaning, which he defines as a sense of emotional investment in life which is thought to be outside our usual awareness (Davis, 2010).

Trauma, by definition, overwhelms an individual's usual abilities to cope and adjust, and calls into question the most basic assumptions one makes about themselves, the world, their relationships, and the human condition (Landsman, in Kauffman, 2002). It alters an individual's emotional and cognitive experience as well as their behaviour, and often leads to a loss of meaning. The emphasis on meaning within trauma and bereavement literature resonates very strongly with existential theory.

According to Frankl (1984), humans have a fundamental 'will towards meaning', by which he refers to the natural tendency for humans to need and search for meaning in life. He argues that it is essential to human existence, stressing its importance in the face of unavoidable suffering and emphasizing the ability to choose one's attitude toward suffering as the 'last of the human freedoms' (Frankl, 1984, pg.74). For him, the '...quest for meaning is the key to mental health and human flourishing' (Frankl, 1984, pg.157). That we may '...transform a personal tragedy into a triumph...' and '... when we are no longer able to change a situation...' that we are then '...challenged to change ourselves'



(Frankl, 1984: 116) highlights a key feature of existential thinking, and may provide a gateway for understanding post-traumatic growth (discussed in greater detail later).

Meaning making is a crucial aspect of existential philosophy and would be seen as a crucial aspect of understanding traumatic bereavement through an existential-phenomenological framework. Existential philosophy holds that we must face up to the paradox that life is meaningless but that humans are innately meaning-seeking beings. Although this need for meaning may generally lie outside of one's awareness, it is commonly brought to the fore following traumatic events such as the unexpected loss of a loved one, when life appears to be suddenly stripped of all meaning, leaving the bereaved individual with questions such as 'why me?' (Landsman, in Kauffman, 2002).

### **3.3 Meaning making: the evidence-base**

In spite of the centrality of meaning in the literature, studies that have attempted to ascertain the role of meaning making following traumatic events have been inconclusive. A number of studies have shown that the search for meaning is not always successful. McIntosh et al. (1993) found that only 23% of parents who lost their children to Sudden Infant Death (SID) reported having found any meaning in the years following their loss, and in subsequent interviews many reported having given up this search altogether. Keese and colleagues (2008) reported that 47% of bereaved parents were unable to make sense of their loss up to 6 years after the event, and Lehman et al, (1987) reported that 64% of parents who lost their children had not found any meaning in their loss. Other studies, however, have shown that grief is experienced as less intense

(Schwartberg & Janoff-Bulman, 1991), more positive immune system functioning is experienced (Bower et al., 2003), and higher levels of subjective well-being are reported (Stein et al., 1997) when meaning is made. So although a majority of trauma survivors searched for meaning, the relationship between the search for meaning and outcomes is complex (Landsman, 1993).

While findings have been mixed, what emerges is that generally there does appear to be a search for meaning following traumatic loss, even if it is challenging and sometimes unsuccessful. The evidence suggests that it is reasonable to not assume that traumatically bereaved individuals will find meaning in their loss. It is for this reason that in spite of the current emphasis on meaning making within the bereavement scholarship, this study does not assume that meaning making will have played a particular role in the experience of traumatic bereavement.

#### **4 Traumatic bereavement and pathology**

*‘Although mourning involves grave departures from the normal attitude toward life, it never occurs to us to regard it as a pathological condition and to refer it to a medical treatment. We rely on its being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful.’*

*Sigmund Freud*

Despite the fact that Freud had not himself viewed bereavement in terms of pathology, theories that developed out of his work introduced this manner of thinking. An article written by Deutsch (1937) on the absence of grief as a sickness and Lindemann's (1944) study on pathological forms of grief were particularly influential in cementing the idea of normal and pathological grieving.

However, even if bereavement is acknowledged as a universal and non-clinical life experience to which most people adapt well (Bonanno et al., 2002) it is also the case that studies have shown bereaved individuals to have higher rates of disability and medication use than their non-bereaved counterparts (Parkes, 1996; Stroebe et al., 2007; Willis et al., 1984).

Parkes (1993) asserted that unexpected deaths are traumatic and represent a special risk to mental health. Epidemiological studies have suggested that people who experience loss or trauma are at higher risk for a range of psychiatric disorders relative to others (Kessler, Davis, & Kendler, 1997; Turner & Lloyd, 1995). Those who have experienced significant loss also tend to report lower self-esteem, a greater sense of vulnerability, less interpersonal trust, more worry, poorer health, and lower levels of psychological wellbeing, many years after the loss (eg: deVries, Davis, Wortman, & Lehman, 1997; Gluhoski & Wortman, 1996; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991). Generally, traumatic bereavement is associated with greater psychopathology and reduced psychological functioning (van de Kolk, 1996). Consequently, there is a split in the literature with regards to pathologising grief.

#### **4.1.1 DSM V: Omission of the Bereavement Exclusion**

In the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 4<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM-IV), (APA, 1994), clinicians were advised to refrain from diagnosing individuals with Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) within 2 months of experiencing a significant bereavement. This was known as the 'bereavement exclusion'. The reason for the exclusion was to prevent the diagnosis and treatment of individuals who had normal reactions to what is seen to be a universal and normal life

experience, with MDD. The DSM-V (APA, 2013) however, has omitted this exclusion. The reasons, as stated by the APA (2013) for the omission of the bereavement exclusion include the following:

- 1) The intention of removing the implication that grief lasts up to 2 months, when clinicians and grief counsellors agree that it is more commonly 1-2 years.
- 2) It aims to give bereavement recognition as a psycho-social stressor that can precipitate a major depressive episode soon after a bereavement adding additional risk (eg. suicidal ideation, poorer somatic health, etc.) to already vulnerable individuals (eg. who have already experienced a significant loss or have other mental health disorders)
- 3) Bereavement-related major depression is more likely to occur in individuals with past personal and family histories of major depressive episodes
- 4) The depressive symptoms associated with bereavement-related depression respond to the same psychosocial and medication treatments as non-bereavement related depression.

Guidance is also provided to distinguish normal bereavement from MDD, highlighting that in grief, painful feelings are often mixed with positive memories of the deceased whereas in MDD, mood and ideation are almost constantly negative. Furthermore in grief, self-esteem is usually preserved but in MDD feelings of worthlessness are common. In overall support of the omission of the bereavement exclusion, the APA argues that ‘...although most people experiencing the loss of a loved one experience bereavement without developing a major depressive episode, evidence does not support the

separation of loss of a loved one from other stressors in terms of its likelihood of precipitating a major depressive episode or the relative likelihood that the symptoms will remit spontaneously' (APA, 2013, pg. 5).

While the effect of the omission of the bereavement inclusion on MDD remains to be seen, it has generally been the case that emphasis on treatment has been on PTSD. The issue with this emphasis, however is that only 10-25% of those affected will have symptoms diagnosable for PTSD (Freidman et al., 2006). Bonanno (2004) argues that the focus on PTSD leads to traumatic life events being thought of terms of pathological or non-pathological terms. Furthermore, PTSD does not offer a comprehensive view of psychological trauma since survivors can present with a broad range of challenges such as MDD, GAD, panic, acute stress disorder, substance abuse, and dissociative disorders (see, eg. Kristensen, Weisaerth & Heir, 2012). PTSD also does not take into account the loss of the loved one and the grief that follows, thus suggesting that the emphasis on PTSD takes a narrow view of the experience of traumatic bereavement.

#### **4.1.2 Complicated Grief**

A further split in the literature with regards to the link between traumatic bereavement and psychopathology (Rubin et al., 2000) is thus concerned with whether traumatic bereavement leads to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (van de Kolk, Herron & Hostetler, 1994) or Complicated Grief (CG).

Complicated Grief (CG) has been a prominent line of research within bereavement scholarship, the goals of which have been to investigate the symptoms of grief, examine the consequences of CG for subsequent physical

and psychological health, and develop treatment approaches accordingly. Proponents of CG argue that it is different to MDD, anxiety, and PTSD, and that treatment approaches for these are therefore not appropriate.

Of many classifications or terms used for CG such as atypical grief, pathological grief, and chronic grief (Prigerson, Frank et al., 1995; Prigerson et al., 2009; Rando, 1993), one of the more established criteria is that of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) which was put forward for inclusion in the DSM-V (Prigerson et al., 2009).

PGD is defined as a combination of separation distress and cognitive, emotional, and behavioural symptoms that develop following the death of a loved one and continue for at least 6 months causing significant impairment in occupation, social, and/or other important areas of functioning.

The criteria for PGD include:

Intense yearning/longing, either daily or disabling, and 5 or more of the following symptoms (daily or to a disabling degree):

- 1) Feeling stunned, dazed, or shocked by the death
- 2) Avoiding reminders of the reality of the loss
- 3) Having trouble accepting the death
- 4) Having difficulty trusting others
- 5) Feeling bitterness or anger related to the loss
- 6) Experiencing difficulty moving on with life
- 7) Experiencing confusion about one's role in life or a diminished sense of self

- 8) Feeling that life is unfulfilling, empty, or meaningless
- 9) Feeling numb

In addition, Shear and colleagues (2011) identified suicidal thinking and behaviour, rumination, and physical and emotional activation when exposed to reminders, as additional symptoms of PGD.

Despite the rejection of PGD into the DSM-V, proponents continue to argue that a minority of bereaved individuals show symptoms that require diagnosis and treatment that is distinct to both Major Depressive Disorder and PTSD (Prigerson et al., 2009).

#### **4.1.3 The issue of pathologising grief: an existential perspective**

Representing the other side of the debate is the rallying cry that 'pain is not pathology' (Stolorow, 2007, pg. 10). Existential thinkers seek to avoid restrictive models that categorize and label people, choosing instead to view symptoms of disturbance as 'problems of living' (van Deurzen in Dryden, 2006), or 'expressions of an individual's attempts to defend against central anxieties' (Spinelli, 1989, pg. 135). What the medical model would view as 'symptoms' are not labeled as such, but are thought to reveal or disclose the anxieties that a person is defending against. Indeed, an existential framework would largely reject the medical model, arguing that while bio-genetic factors may have some part in mental health issues, mental disturbances are mainly ontological. Kierkegaard (1851) stated that the secret to the art of helping the other is to first of all take pains to find him where he is, and then 'be there'. An existential approach would encourage paying attention to social and relational contexts

and would emphasize exploring and addressing the underlying meanings of distress.

Laing (1967), a key proponent of anti-psychiatry and the medical model, argued that 'an intense discipline of un-learning is necessary for anyone before one can begin to experience the world afresh, with innocence, truth and love' (Laing, 1967, pg. 23). From Laing's perspective, much in line with phenomenological approaches, we should endeavour to unlearn our experience of diagnostic criteria and the medical model in order to build a particular kind of relationship with the other. He asserted that what was essential was observing and providing empathy in order to understand and work out any meaning and significance of behaviour, rather than intervening to 'treat' what would be seen as 'maladaptive' behaviour by the medical model. Van Deurzen-Smith (1997, pg. 3) states that the aim of an existential approach is 'to clarify, reflect upon and understand life' rather than setting out to cure people in the tradition of the medical model. The emphasis would be to place the individual and their distress 'in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1927). Importantly, instead of trying to avoid distress and difficulty, individuals are encouraged to learn to face the inevitable challenges of existence.

Paidoussis (2012) points out that existing theories such as Parkes (1993) assumes a linearity in the process which follows traumatic bereavement, where the event leads to a particular psychological trajectory. She points out that contrary to this, existential theory (Heidegger, 1927; Sartre, 1943a) does not take a linear view to time or human existence and that even though the past can influence the present, there is no causative relationship between the two. We see this in the work of Sartre (1943a), for whom an aspect of Nothingness



is the emptiness which man fills with his thoughts and perceptions and determines his own course of action by reference to an imagined future. Thus, human beings move forward not because they are propelled by what is behind, but because of their motives that are directed towards existence in the future (Cooper, 2003). Paidoussis (2012) argues, therefore, that determining whether traumatic bereavement causes pathology is not helpful.

According to Heidegger (1927), the past is viewed as a 'throwness' from which choices are made, resulting in the creation of new possibilities. Authentic living involves understanding and accepting the parameters of life, including that our possibilities are our own (Heidegger, 1927). It is this realisation which then shows man that he is free to choose how to live and what values to attach to things (Warnock, 1970). The anxiety which is seen to arise following traumatic bereavement, therefore, could be understood from an existential perspective as a 'fundamental mood of existence' (Barnett, 2009, pg. 12) unconcealed by the event, rather than as a pathological response to it. From this perspective, traumatic bereavement need not be damaging. Instead, it is possible that through such an experience, one may experience moments of authenticity which can in turn be life enriching (Barnett, 2009). Indeed, authenticity is about being true to existence, change, and the givens, all of which are revealed and brought to awareness following traumatic loss.

## **5 Post-traumatic growth: the spiritual dimension**

A broad definition of spirituality will refer to the way in which individuals attribute meaning to their lives through religion, a philosophical outlook on life, an

ideology, or other value system either pre-existing or personally developed. An individual's spirituality says something about how he sees, relates to, and understands the world, including what is unknown. It has implications for the way one understands himself, his relationships with others and the environment, and as a result has implications for the way he chooses to live. As such, spirituality might be understood as part of the guiding system that allows one to interpret his experience and generate personal meaning and purpose (Richards in Neimeyer, 2010). An existential perspective, too, would attest that it is on the spiritual dimension that one creates meaning and purpose for themselves, or indeed determines what one lives for, or would be willing to die for (van Deurzen, 2002). It is on this dimension that one might experience tension between purpose and absurdity or hope and despair, themes which are likely to be pertinent to the experience of traumatic bereavement.

Traumatic bereavement can have a devastating impact on an individual's life, shattering all hope, destroying confidence and sense of self, and leading to a sense of utter meaninglessness in life. As discussed, it can challenge all the assumptions one makes about life, including their spirituality, and their beliefs about God and the universe. However in addition to the large body of literature which supports the negative impact of traumatic bereavement (Parkes, 1996; Stroebe et al., 2007; Willis et al., 1984), there is also a growing body of evidence for the struggle of grief as positively transformative, with one important area of change being the potential to advance spiritual growth (Chen, 1997; Tarackova, 1996).

Traumatic bereavement literature puts great emphasis on the importance of religion and spirituality in traumatic bereavement. Overall, religious belief is

considered to be ‘...one of the most frequently used and effective means of coping with death’ (Schuchter & Zisook, 1993, pg. 32). Of course it may also throw up questions about God and lead to a loss of a faith (Schwartzberg & Janoff-Bulman, 1991), but there is evidence that such experiences can lead to the strengthening of an individuals’ religious commitment (Calhoun, Tedeschi & Lincoirt, 1992). Often, where beliefs in spirituality and God are challenged, the system that emerges is frequently thought to be stronger (Franz, Farrell, & Trolley in Neimeyer, 2010). An integrative review of 73 studies on the role of religion and spirituality in adjustment following bereavement (Wortman & Park, 2009) found that in general there was a positive outcome as a result of some spiritual or religious belief system. This is likely because religion and spirituality assist in creating meaning out of a loss experience. In addition, it is likely that religious beliefs also offer the possibility for eternal life and therefore a continued relationship with the loved one or hope to be re-united with them. Furthermore, it is possible that ritual associated with religion and spirituality plays a role in moving through the grief process, where for example prayer or meditation can assist the individual in the healing process. It is important to note, however, that some individuals do not find either religion or spirituality to be necessarily helpful (eg: Gilbert, 1992; Lovell, Hemmings & Hill, 1993; Shuchter & Zisook, 1993).

Recall that following a loss of world order, the traumatically bereaved individual is thrown into an authentic being-towards-death. This is how, according to Heidegger, death individualizes human existence. Dasein becomes aware of his death, and in turn his freedom to make choices about how to live. It is this experience and its struggle which can lead to a re-evaluation of one’s

perspectives on life, provide an opportunity to uncover new meanings and possibilities, and therefore create grounds for change. This awareness of one's mortality can help an individual to find strength and purpose in life, and encourage living a more fully and meaningfully. In other words, the individual can be said to have experienced post-traumatic growth.

## **6 Post-traumatic growth: the evidence base**

Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006, 2008) use the term post-traumatic growth (PTG) to refer to the positive changes that occur through the struggle with events like traumatic bereavement. Following traumatic bereavement, many individuals report having been changed for the better where growth reported tends to be in terms of changes to sense of self, relationships with others, and a changed philosophy of life (Calhoun & Tedeschi in Neimeyer, 2010). Overall, bereaved individuals report a greater appreciation of life (Kallenberg & Soderfeldt, 1992), greater existential meaning, and positive changes in life goals (Edmonds & Hooker, 1992).

Although Pearlman and colleagues (2014) acknowledge that the concept of PTG is prevalent in traumatic bereavement research and practice, as well as other areas of human adversity, they also question the extent to which the available data is valid. For instance in Lehman et al. (1987), 74% of respondents bereaved of a spouse or child said that they experienced at least one positive change, usually in the form of improved self-confidence or greater focus on living in the present moment. However, Pearlman et al. (2014) question whether self-reports of PTG in this study are valid, highlighting two issues to illustrate the point. Firstly, they point out that positive comments made

by respondents seemed to be dwarfed by negative ones. They questioned whether a respondent reported focusing more on the present but also reporting symptoms of depression, PTSD, reduced concentration, and reduced quality of life, they can still be said to have experienced PTG. Secondly, there were inconsistencies between statements about personal growth and other measures. Tedeschi and Calhoun (2006; 2008) stated that in Lehman et al. (1987) respondents reported warmer, more intimate relationships as one of the most important aspects of PTG, but only 20% of respondents said this. In fact, the same study showed that respondents experienced an adverse effect on relationships with friends and family (see Wortman, 2004, for a more detailed discussion). Looking beyond Lehman et al. (1997), there is evidence that individuals who move through the struggle of traumatic bereavement experience an increased connectedness with others, deeper empathy, and a greater ability to connect emotionally with others (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). Families often report growing closer following traumatic loss (Lehman et al., 1993). Based on these criticisms and inconclusive evidence, Tedeschi and Calhoun (2008) have stated that PTG does not invariably follow traumatic bereavement and that clinicians should therefore not expect growth or give traumatically bereaved clients the expectation of growth following sudden loss. The study, while remaining interested in PTG, remains open to a lack thereof.

## **7 The relationality of grief**

What begins to emerge from the development of literature is the relationality of traumatic grief. From an existential perspective, Being-in-relation is a fundamental aspect of human existence and 'being-with' underpins Dasein's

capacity for relationality. Stolorow (2009) emphasizes the importance of relationship and support following traumatic bereavement, stating that existential anxiety, the feeling of 'unheimlich' which is disclosed by traumatic bereavement can be made more bearable if the grief finds a context of understanding, or what he calls a 'relational home'.

The emphasis on phenomenological contextualism (Orange, Atwood & Stolorow, 1997) has its roots in developmental theory, which states that it is a lack of adequate attunement and emotional responsiveness to a child's painful feelings that disrupts the ability to modulate that experience and which then leads to psychopathology. In terms of bereavement theory, Stolorow (2009) argues that being-with the bereaved person's painful feelings offers an opportunity to move towards an authentic Being-towards-death and thus a meaningful existence after traumatic loss.

Paradoxically, Dasein is also always fundamentally alone. This refers not only to the 'mineness' of death, but also that Dasein is alone in his suffering. The traumatically bereaved individual is thus likely to experience what Stolorow (2009, pg.14) refers to as an 'unbridgeable gulf' between oneself and the rest of the world, in reference to the 'profound sense of singularity which is built in to the experience of trauma' (Stolorow, 2009, pg.14). This can be understood as existential isolation.

## 8 Continuing Bonds

*'And then one or the other dies...we think of this love as cut short; like a dance stopped in mid-career... bereavement is a universal and integral part of our experience of love. It follows marriage as normally as marriage follows*

*courtship or as autumn follows summer. It is not a truncation of the process but one of its phases; not the interruption of the dance, but the next figure'*

C. S. Lewis

Traditionally, a continued relationship with the deceased has been viewed as pathogenic (Bowlby, 1980; Freud, 1917; Lindemann, 1944; Parkes, 1970). More recently, there has been movement away from the idea that successful grieving involves 'letting go' of the loved one (Klass, Silverman & Nickman, 1996; Archer, 2008) and a growing body of literature has pointed to the importance of a continued relationship with the deceased. This may mean that the relationship takes on a spiritual dimension such that the deceased is thought to be in heaven or acting as a guardian angel, or it may continue through the participation in charities, causes, or activities associated with the loved one and/or their cause of death. Additionally, from a cognitive constructive perspective, integrating the loved one into the new self-narrative is a crucial part of meaning making (Klass et al., 1996). In further support of its importance, Attig (2002) states that '...as we grieve we seek and find ways of making a transition to lasting love', seeking to give the loved one a symbolic immortality which permits us to continue to remember them and be affected by them. He refers to making a shift from loving them in presence to loving them in absence, stating that '...nothing is more difficult. Nothing is more important. Nothing is more rewarding.' (Attig, in Neimeyer 2010, pg. 46).

Although the idea of letting go originated with Freud's (1917, pg. 253) deatathesis and his belief that an attempt to maintain a relationship with the deceased was a '... clinging to the object through medium of an hallucinatory wishful psychosis', he was himself known to have written about his strong sense

of attachment to his daughter up to 30 years following her death (Shapiro, 2001).

A key area of the continuing bonds literature is concerned with the common experience of sensing the presence of the deceased following bereavement. In spite of the growing literature to support the normality of such experiences, the field remains divided. Studies have shown that around half of the population of bereaved individuals experience a sense of presence of the deceased (Datson & Marwit, 1997; Kalish & Reynolds, 1973; Olson, Suddeth, Peterson & Egelhoff, 1985). Klass and Walter (2001) argue that the frequency with which this is reported, in itself suggests that it should not be deemed pathological. There are, however, instances where continuing bonds may be thought of as unhelpful. For instance, there is evidence to suggest that individuals who experience insecure styles of attachment (Bowlby, 1980) are more prone to a diagnosis of chronic grief (Bonanno, Wortman & Nesse, 2004). However, while research has been done to try and distinguish pathological from healthy continuing bonds (Field et al., 1999; Field & Fredrichs, 2004; Field & Filanosky, 2010), the precise manner in which the two might be differentiated is unclear. Certainly, since the experience is reported cross-culturally (Klass & Goss, 1999; Silverman & Klass, 1996) it should be considered within its cultural context and perhaps with consideration of the manner in which the bond either assists or hinders an individual's adjustment to the bereavement. In essence, continuing bonds expressions that are indicative of unresolved loss imply disbelief that the other is dead. Steffen and Coyle (2012) point out that an important factor distinguishing adaptive versus maladaptive continuing bonds expression is whether the given expression reflects an attempt to maintain a more concrete



tie that entails failure to relinquish the goal to regain physical proximity to the deceased. This can be compared to a more internalised, symbolically-based connection, which suggests a greater acceptance of the death.

## **9 Existential thought and traumatic bereavement: influence of the philosophy on theory**

It is not possible to offer a definitive definition of existential philosophy. Existential philosophers and thinkers have offered varied perspectives with varying emphases on key themes, making it difficult to provide a definite picture of the philosophical movement. It is possible, however, to identify common interests, ancestry, and presuppositions which bring these perspectives together. The following section aims to provide a general understanding of the key concerns of an existential perspective, and it is these perspectives that have informed this study's attempt to form an existential phenomenological perspective of traumatic bereavement.

Existential philosophy is concerned with a person's subjective experience of the world and what it means to be alive.

The philosophy finds its origins in the work of Kierkegaard (1846) and Nietzsche (1882), who were both philosophers of the individual. Kierkegaard (1846) strongly opposed notions of the 'objectivity of science' and Christian dogma, and instead encouraged taking a 'leap of faith' in the pursuit of finding truth which is personal and subjective. Truth was something that was felt, rather than something that was based on proof. He invited his readers to consider that though they might not be able to prove what they believe in, they should live as

though they can. He placed emphasis on finding one's own meaning, a central component of existential philosophy. For him, meaning was found through a personal relationship with God. He was also concerned with the paradoxes of life - infinity and finitude, eternity and temporality, possibility and necessity - in the creating of a self and finding personal meaning. His emphasis on subjective experience, personal truth, and personal meaning would be key aspects of an existential counselling psychology perspective. Nietzsche, famously stating that 'God is dead' (1883), invited his readers to re-evaluate their existence and the way that they chose to live. The notion of eternal recurrence, for instance, asks whether we would be happy to live our lives as we are, over and over again. He wrote powerfully about suffering, using the term 'amor fati' to encourage us to embrace all of life, including the difficult and painful experiences. Not to suffer from them passively but to meet them. He emphasized the key existential themes of freedom, choice, responsibility, and courage, all of which would likely be important to an existential counselling psychology approach. The purpose of Sartre's philosophy was to understand human existence by developing an ontological account of what it is to be human, with the main features of this ontology being Nothingness and freedom. For Sartre (1943a), one aspect of Nothingness referred to the emptiness which man fills with his thoughts and perceptions, and determines his own course of action by reference to an imagined future. Man is not fixed in the way that beings-in-themselves (objects) are fixed but has unrealized potential and freedom to create himself, hence 'existence precedes essence' (Sartre, 1943a). For Sartre (1943a), authenticity does not refer to a fixed state but one which is continually self-perpetuated and re-assumed through reflective choice. It is about the way one responds to and

chooses himself according to his facticity (the givens of a particular person's existence), such as the loss of a loved one.

Heidegger's question was also one of ontology. Unlike Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, however, his philosophy is immediately concerned with our embeddedness in a world that is already constituted (van Deurzen-Smith, 1997). He was concerned with the meaning of Being, which he believed was best investigated from the privileged position of human being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1927). Our embeddedness means that our relationship to the world will influence and affect our involvement in it, and this includes the incorporation and rejection of various beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitudes. Reaching a scientific or objective truth about human experience was therefore not a realistic goal, and thus Heidegger supported hermeneutic phenomenology as his method for investigation of human being.

At the very root of existential philosophy lies the issue of human freedom. The philosophy not only aims to highlight this freedom but also encourages acting on it (Warnock, 1970) and living authentically, from a place of personal truth. Authenticity, rather than being about what is true, factual or close to a true self, is about being true to existence, change, and the givens. Specifically, it means being aware of one's mortality. Heidegger believed that man is in danger of forgetting that he is free to choose how he wants to live and what to value (Heidegger, 1927/1962). He referred to this as becoming consumed by the anonymous 'They' and falling in line with the pre-determined values of the world. Such an evasion of freedom constitutes inauthentic living (Heidegger, 1927). Conversely, authentic living begins through reflection, when man realizes he is unique and therefore ultimately alone. It involves understanding

and accepting the parameters of life, facing up to our limitations and accepting the 'mineness' of death (Heidegger, 1927, pg. 284). The key to authentic living is to face up to these limitations and thus our Being-towards-death. This discloses Dasein's 'ownmost potentiality-for-being' and a breaking away from the anonymous 'They'. The resulting anxiety reveals what is really there – freedom, nothingness, aloneness and mortality. It makes us aware that things are always in flux and changing and in turn brings to our awareness, our being in time. It means that one is never complete until death, and it is because of this awareness and the knowledge that things can change which then frees one up to choose what values to attach to things. Importantly, Dasein has both the capacity for being open to Being (authentic) and cutting itself off from aspects of existence that are uncertain or threatening, and both are necessary.

One way of understanding a particular individual's experience from an existential perspective is through the use of the 4 world model put forward by van Deurzen-Smith (1984). Using this model, experience is mapped out across the four dimensions of experience (physical, personal, social, and spiritual).

Bearing all of this in mind, an existential-phenomenological approach to counselling psychology would generally seek to help people to come to terms with life in all of its complexity. It would make the assumption that humans are bound to certain existential givens and assert that these givens provide both limitations and possibilities. It would encourage people to come to terms with the contradictions and paradoxes of life (eg. that there is no life without death, and thus love without loss), in order to live with a greater degree of personal truth and reality. Anxiety would not be avoided, but seen as an ontological given, to be embraced in order that one can become more aware of existential

reality and exercise greater personal freedom towards a meaningful life. This was seen to be the case in a similar study to the present one, in which Paidoussis (2012) investigated the lived experience of traumatic bereavement in order to understand its impact on the bereaved person's meaning-making process. Framed too by existential thought, the study found that traumatic bereavement threw individuals into a state of awareness about the existential givens and the human condition, a mode which resembles Heidegger's Being-towards-death (1927). The study reported that engaging authentically with these givens helped individuals to establish a meaningful life after loss.

# Methodology

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## 10 Methodology, Ontology, and Epistemology

Methodology is the broad framework within which research is conducted. It is the ‘...general approach to studying research topics’ (Silverman, 2007, pg.77) and provides a way of thinking about data. Deciding on what methodology to adopt for this study required an in-depth engagement with my ontological and epistemological positions.

Ontological positions specify the relationship between the world and our human interpretations and practices (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Positions vary along a continuum from realism, which asserts the existence of a real and objective world independent of our interaction with it, to relativist positions which assert that reality is entirely dependent on our interaction and interpretation of it. An integrative stance is important to counselling psychology (Hollanders, 2003) and consequently, I take a pluralistic attitude in the research context in that I recognise that ‘divergent research methodologies can be equally valid in exploring important questions’ (McAteer, 2010, in Milton, 2010, pg. 8). However, for the purpose of this research question I have chosen to limit the

study in terms of my epistemological and ontological perspectives in order to position myself as researcher more transparently. Furthermore, while I accept the merits of multiple methodologies and mixed methods, I limited this study to one method of investigation in order to maximise depth of exploration, given the practical limits of time and the size of this dissertation.

For this study I have adopted a critical realist perspective, meaning that I believe there is a real world 'out there' but that we can only ever know it partially since our knowing is always informed by our personal and social influences. The implications of this for the present study are that its findings are a result of *my* analysis and do not claim to provide an objective account or a singular 'truth' but rather one interpretation of it.

Epistemology, a branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge and the reliability and validity of the claims we make, is primarily interested in the question of what is actually possible to find out. I have adopted a contextualist epistemological stance which, like critical realism conceives of an objective world but does not believe it is ever objectively knowable (Tebes, 2005). I believe that humans are inextricably embedded in the world to the extent that our perception will always be coloured by context. Similar to the critical realist position, a contextualist epistemological stance does not assume a single reality but rather views knowledge as emerging in context and therefore as local, situated, and provisional (Madill et al., 2000; Tebes, 2005). The implication of this from a research perspective is that knowledge is co-created. What emerges during interviews and analysis will always to some extent be a reflection of the researcher. This knowledge which arises, however, can be

considered to be true/valid within its context and thus this position retains the notion of 'truth', as opposed to 'the truth'.

The ontological and epistemological positions I adopt acknowledge that as researcher I bring knowledge and assumptions to this research that are based on my personal, cultural, and professional background, and that these will influence the findings of the study. This is not problematic since qualitative research acknowledges the influence of the researcher and therefore takes measures to manage this as a part of the research process. The manner in which I managed this is discussed throughout this chapter, with the section titled 'Reflexivity' explicitly addressing the presuppositions I brought to the research.

## **10.1 Qualitative Research Methodology**

Qualitative research provides a broad framework or paradigm for conducting research and also refers to the specific techniques of data collection and analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In addition to my epistemological and ontological stances, this study is framed by existential phenomenological thought. This philosophical and theoretical position places me within the qualitative paradigm since it means that I take an interest in subjective lived-experience and context. As a trainee counselling psychologist I have found that working with individual experience provides depth and richness in understanding the phenomenon being explored, and provides better outcomes than an approach that is purely symptom-driven or scientific. I believe valuable knowledge can be obtained through exploring subjective experience and personal meanings, and am more interested in obtaining this type of knowledge



through my research question than aiming for replication, prediction, or the identification of cause-effect relationships which quantitative methodologies would seek. The paucity of qualitative studies on the present topic which are framed by existential thought also supports the relevance and timeliness of such an in-depth study.

My background in Psychology means that my initial introduction to research was in quantitative methodology. While I appreciate the merits of quantitative approaches for investigating a variety of research questions, I felt that these approaches failed to capture the richness of lived experience that I sought for the present investigation. This study seeks more personal and in-depth insights into the phenomenon. I was keen to understand the experience of living with traumatic bereavement in all its complexity, and felt I could better capture this through the use of qualitative methodology.

Qualitative methodologies use words (and sometimes images) as data to describe and/or interpret meaning and the quality and texture of experience. They are unlike quantitative approaches that generally take a realist position (usually associated with positivism) and seek objective knowledge, or truth without bias, through empiricism. Qualitative epistemological positions range from naïve realism to relativist stances, all of which concern themselves with subjective experience and attempt to offer rich, textured, nuanced descriptions of emotions, thoughts or experiences (Finlay & Evans, 2009). It is these considerations which led to my use of qualitative methodology to investigate the central question.

## 10.2 Method

Method refers to the ‘...specific research technique’ (Silverman, 2003, p.77) which is applied, and provides guidelines for what to do with data. With consideration of my ontology, epistemology, theoretical and philosophical allegiances, my personal interest, and the particular research question, Jonathan Smith’s (1996) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) felt like an appropriate method of analysis to use for this study. Critical realism and contextualism are the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin IPA. An existential phenomenological framework combined with the research question and my own interest in experience and perspectives also fit with this method.

## 11 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is concerned with understanding lived experience and how people make sense of their experiences. In this section, I will first briefly outline IPA as a method and then examine the way that it is idiographic, phenomenological, and interpretative, highlighting the aspects of other phenomenologies from which IPA has taken influence before moving on to a critical assessment of the method itself.

IPA is an experiential qualitative approach to research. It was developed within psychology to study the human, health, and social sciences by Professor Jonathan Smith (Smith, 1996; Smith, Flowers & Osborn, 1997), for understanding how people experience and make meaning from specific phenomena. The work of Heidegger (1927), a philosopher within the field of

existential phenomenology and hermeneutics, heavily inspired and influenced IPA. It is through Heidegger (1927) that phenomenology met existentialism and questions around our ability to transcend our embeddedness arose. Due to this influence, IPA focuses specifically on the interpretative components of the research process, occupying an epistemological position between critical realism and contextual constructivism. For instance, the findings of this study are viewed as my interpretation of the participants' interpretation of their experience, known as the double hermeneutic (Smith & Osborn, 2003, pg. 51). Reflexivity is thus crucial to IPA, which takes a Heideggerian approach to the use of the 'phenomenological attitude' and the hermeneutic circle (discussed in greater detail later).

IPA utilizes small samples of 3-10 participants who are considered to be 'experts' through experience of the phenomenon being investigated. It usually uses semi-structured and/or unstructured interviews for data collection. Analysis involves several stages and demands a close and detailed interpretative engagement with the data. The data and the results usually detail both individual and group themes with a clear connection to the participants evidenced through extracts in its write-up.

## **12 IPA as Idiographic**

IPA is idiographic in that it is concerned with individual life. It attempts to capture particular experiences as experienced by particular people. It is interested in offering 'detailed, nuanced analyses of particular instances of lived experience' (Smith et al., 2009, pg. 37). IPA views people as meaning makers. It accepts

that we cannot know an experience at the pre-reflective level but that we can find a 'way in' through the manner in which participants represent that experience. In that respect, the meaning participants assign to their experience is thought to be representative of the experience itself (Smith et al., 2009).

Its interest in detail refers both to depth of analysis and IPA's interest in understanding how particular experiential phenomena are understood by a particular group of people in a particular context. It takes a dual focus on the unique characteristics of individual participants as well as the patterning of meaning across participants, but it is not concerned with universal causation or generalizability in the way that nomothetic research is. IPA - and this project - attempts to shed light on nomothetic research by either illuminating or problematizing what we already know in theory, and/or encourage further investigation into any new findings.

### **13 IPA as phenomenological**

Phenomenology is an umbrella term for a philosophical movement and range of research methods that are specifically concerned with exploring experience and how one makes sense of their world. This study being concerned with experience made phenomenology a good avenue to pursue.

Phenomenology has its origins in the work of Husserl (1913) who wanted to provide a new and radical way of undertaking philosophy. The development of phenomenology has, however, seen that phenomenological philosophers have been 'extraordinarily diverse in their interests, interpretation of the central issues of phenomenology, application of what they understood to be the

phenomenological method, and the development of what they took to be the phenomenological programme for the future of philosophy' (Moran, 2000, p.3). This controversy has led to the existence of various phenomenological methods, with its two main camps being the descriptive approaches which tend to be more Husserlian, and the hermeneutic/interpretative approaches which tend to be more Heideggerian. IPA situates itself between these two camps, taking influence from each side, viewing the varying phenomenological approaches as complementary rather than conflicting.

### **13.1 A General View of Descriptive Approaches**

Descriptive phenomenology was inspired by the philosophical movement of Husserl (1913) in the 1900s. It adopts small sample sizes of at least 3 participants in order to obtain rich accounts of experience, utilizes semi-structured and/or unstructured interviews, and places emphasis on scientific rigour. This rigour is usually achieved by applying 'scientific phenomenological reduction' (setting aside the natural world and the world of interpretation in order to see the phenomenon in its essence) and the process of 'free imaginative variation' (a scientific method which enables reaching invariant structures of the phenomenon).

Description stays close to the data and does not involve interpretation. Results usually take the form of a synthesized summary statement outlining the general structure of the phenomenon. The small sample sizes mean that generalizability is not possible, however one can engage in a degree of 'naturalistic generalisation' (insight from detailed descriptions of individual

cases) and 'theoretical transferability' (a degree of transferability of findings from this sample to greater populations).

### 13.2 Descriptive approaches: Transcendental Phenomenology

Husserl (1913) described phenomenology as the study of the essence of conscious experience. He called for a 'return to the things themselves', inviting us to fundamentally alter the way we see things. His transcendental phenomenology is so named because of his call to engage with the phenomenon and make sense of it directly and immediately, *transcending* the personal and the contextual and *avoiding* interpretation or attribution of meaning. This requires a setting aside of the 'natural attitude' (our everyday assumptions about how things are) and adopting a 'phenomenological attitude' (a reflexive move away from the natural attitude) in order to look at the phenomenon afresh. He suggests a series of 'reductions' through the epoche/'bracketing' of past theoretical knowledge, culture, context and history, which he suggests will allow us to reach the universal essences/invariant structures of the phenomenon as it presents itself to consciousness. He also suggests methods which he refers to as 'transcendental reduction' and 'eidetic reduction' using free imaginative variations. These reductions are complex since they involve standing away from consciousness to see the phenomenon in its essence, and are therefore quite highly contested considering how embedded humans are.

The idea that we can step away entirely from our personal and contextual knowledge so that it does not in any way colour our view of the phenomenon

does not fit with my personal epistemology. My stance is that one always views a phenomenon within a particular context and from a particular perspective. IPA takes a more modest approach than Husserl's phenomenology since it does not consider it possible to reach the essences or invariant structures of a phenomenon, but would instead only attempt to get as experience-close to it as possible. As such, IPA felt like a more suitable method for my project than Husserl's transcendental phenomenology.

### **13.2.1 Descriptive Approaches: Phenomenological Psychology**

Giorgi's (1985) empirical phenomenology is one of the better known descriptive approaches. It is relatively purist in that it is strongly grounded in Husserlian philosophy in its attempt to stay close to the phenomenon and avoid interpretation. It is also Husserlian in its emphasis on intentionality and scientific rigour through free imaginative variation. It was an important method to consider adopting because it marks a shift in emphasis from one's own experience to the experience of others, which was relevant to this study. Although this method was not adopted, its use of bracketing and the phenomenological attitude were useful to the application of IPA. As more interviews were conducted and as I moved along the hermeneutic circle, I noticed myself identifying common threads between participant narratives. This sense of familiarity, or 'knowing' needed to be balanced with caution to ensure that I did not make assumptions about participant experience. For instance, feeling anger towards the deceased following suicide was powerful in some instances and yet in other instances, although felt, was not directed at the

deceased. Bracketing and the phenomenological attitude assisted in staying open to such divergences in experience.

### 13.3 The Phenomenological Attitude

The 'phenomenological attitude' is thought to be arguably 'the most significant dimension of phenomenological research' (Finlay, 2011, pg.73) and has been highly influential to IPA since the method requires a constant questioning and staying open to the phenomena. It follows on from Husserl's (1913) reduction in its attempt to hold in abeyance/bracket prior assumptions and knowledge, while also adopting an open and non-judgemental attitude of curiosity and wonder (Giorgi, 2009). It requires a constant questioning of self and critical attention to the present experience through bracketing of prior understandings in order to reach beyond the natural attitude of taken-for-granted meanings and understandings.

The phenomenological attitude is beneficial throughout the entire research process and is particularly important during data collection and analysis. It facilitates achieving as 'experience-close' an understanding of the participant's experience as possible, with minimal influence of the researcher. Recall that the very basis of qualitative research, particularly IPA with its emphasis on reflexivity, is the acknowledgement that results and interpretations are co-constituted by participant, researcher, and context (Finlay, 2011). IPA therefore suggests 'a more enlivened form of bracketing as both a cyclical process and as something that can only be partially achieved' (Smith et al., 2009, pg. 25), highlighting that there will invariably be movement between the natural and



phenomenological attitudes. This means that as researcher, one must stay reflexive and be alert to slipping back into the natural attitude so that a reflexive shift back to the phenomenological attitude can be made. The way I attempted to do this is detailed in the 'Reflexivity' section within this chapter.

### **13.4 Scientific Phenomenological Reduction**

Adopting the phenomenological attitude was challenging. Recall, descriptive phenomenologists attempt to adopt the phenomenological attitude via 'scientific phenomenological reduction'. Giorgi's scientific phenomenological reduction, however, is a modified version of Husserl's reduction since it stops short of the transcendental. Its emphasis is on maintaining an open, reflexive stance, and being fully present to the participant and what is being described in order to explore the meanings that are emerging in the present. This scientific phenomenological reduction places emphasis on maintaining an open and reflective stance, and staying fully present to the participant and what is being described. It involves bracketing previous knowledge in order to explore the meanings that are emerging in the present. Bracketing, as Giorgi (2009) suggests it, attempts not to obliterate but rather suspend one's values, assumptions, culture, judgements, personal history, and so on. This need to be aware of one's preconceived ideas was useful in the application of IPA for the present study because it encouraged a constant questioning of self throughout the research process in order to manage the intrusion of my values. As I discuss in more detail in the 'Reflexivity' section, I was aware of assumptions that I made at the start of the research process. I had, for instance, wondered how an individual could possibly endure and survive such an experience. There was a sense of impossibility which came with the task. Adopting the

phenomenological attitude and attempting phenomenological reduction helped me to hold these assumptions in my awareness and manage any tendency to seek or confirm them in the participants' experience and adapt these assumptions where appropriate. As a result, my views on living with traumatic bereavement were changed over the course of conducting the research such that I now have a sense of hope around the ability of the traumatically bereaved person to reconstruct a meaningful life after loss. As another example, I brought to the research a sense that there is an overemphasis on pathology and symptomology in the treatment of traumatic bereavement. However, the data challenged my views on this and I realise that I had previously neglected to fully appreciate the need to address trauma symptoms such as panic attacks and anxiety, albeit as one element of a larger treatment plan.

The descriptive approach was an important method of investigation to consider. It represents the other major camp of phenomenology and exists in opposition to hermeneutic approaches. It is the approach which stays most closely to Husserl's original phenomenological project in that it attempts to operationalize his eidetic phenomenology and establish the structures or essences of experience. The implication of this is that descriptive phenomenology would attempt to minimise interpretation on the part of the researcher in an attempt to get closer to the experience of the participant. Although I wanted to get as close to the phenomenon as possible, I chose not to adopt this method because it is my epistemological position that a degree of interpretation is unavoidable and as such I feel it is important to acknowledge and incorporate interpretation from the outset of the research process rather than as a final step, as in the case of descriptive approaches.

## 14 IPA as hermeneutic

### 14.1 A General View of Hermeneutic Approaches

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of the interpretation of the meaning of texts (Rennie, 1999). Hermeneutic phenomenology was inspired by the later work of Husserl (1954) which was concerned with the 'lifeworld', Heideggerian phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927) and Gadamer (1975). It utilizes small sample sizes to obtain rich and detailed accounts of experience. Within the hermeneutic branch of phenomenology, the researcher's interpretations are thought to be inextricably intertwined with the findings, so the process calls for reflexive acknowledgment of this involvement. Data collection extends to a wide variety of sources (eg. art, literature, dance, etc.) due to its commitment beyond science and towards the humanities. Due to its strong theoretical grounding in the work of Gadamer (1975) there is a reluctance to formalise a method of analysis and instead it encourages method to emerge uniquely in context. Analysis focuses on understanding the meaning of experience with greater interpretative engagement on contextual and hidden meanings, and denies the notion of essences/invariant structures. Its write-up is usually expressed to evoke lived experience with attention paid to myth and metaphor. These approaches attempt to adopt a position of phenomenological openness (similar to the 'phenomenological attitude' but not so called) and takes explicit acknowledgement of the researcher's inevitable involvement in the research and findings.

I will now outline briefly the theoretical perspectives of the three hermeneutic theorists most relevant to IPA; Heidegger, Schleiermacher and Gadamer (Larkin, Watts and Clifton 2006; Smith, 2007; Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009; see also Moran, 2000).

## **14.2 Schleiermacher and Hermeneutics**

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1998) was a theologian concerned with the interpretation of biblical texts. His emphasis on the importance of bringing together both the grammatical (textual meanings) and psychological elements (the author's intentions) of the phenomenon (Schleiermacher, 1998) has important implications for IPA (Smith, 2007; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It means that although an individual will experience a particular phenomenon in their individual way, this experience is always situated within a shared context, such that effective analysis through detailed and thorough interpretation of a text might allow for new meanings to be discovered that go beyond the initial intentions of the author (Moran, 2000; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This idea fits in with the view of IPA, and my own view, that there exist many realities rather than one single reality.

## **14.3 Heidegger: Hermeneutic Existential Phenomenology**

Heidegger (1927) was influenced by Husserl (1913) but rejected his idea of phenomenological reduction and the undifferentiated 'I' who can perceive and construct the world but is not involved in it, arguing instead that we are immersed, embedded, and fundamentally linked with the world and this makes interpretation inevitable. According to Heidegger, what we understand of

another's experience is indicative and provisional rather than definitive since we cannot escape the contextual basis of our experience (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006), thus achieving a perfect understanding of any phenomenon impossible.

Heidegger's (1927) philosophy marks a move towards hermeneutics and the proposition of hermeneutic phenomenology as a method of revealing Being. His, as well as Merleau-Ponty's (1945) and Sartre's (1943a) phenomenologies, contribute to IPA's 'view of a person as embedded and immersed in a world of objects and relationships, language and culture, projects and concerns' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 21). Heidegger's (1927) emphasis on phenomenology is not only about the data or 'that which appears' (the phenomenon), but also what the researcher brings to it. The phenomenon is ready and appears, but I enable it to happen through my interpretations, meaning that I will always bring my fore-conceptions and fore-understandings to the encounter and see the phenomenon in light of these.

This influence on IPA is its basis for being an explicitly interpretative activity. With its underpinning critical realist epistemology, it takes a more modest approach to phenomenology than the transcendental or other descriptive approaches. It fits with my stance that I cannot transcend my prior knowledge to reveal objective 'truth' (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006) and accepts my involvement in the research process as unavoidable.

This brings forth the importance of reflexivity and the acknowledgment and transparency of my involvement in the research process. Heidegger's (1927) approach also encourages using the phenomenon to become aware of one's

fore-understandings, reminding me to remain open to the fact that many of them may come to light only once engagement with the data through interviews and analysis had started (Smith et al., 2009). These elements of his philosophy influence IPA's more 'enlivened form of bracketing' (Smith et al., 2009, p. 25), as previously discussed.

#### 14.4 Gadamer and Hermeneutics

Gadamer (1975) focussed on the nature of the hermeneutic process and emphasized the active historical/cultural situatedness of all understanding, and asserted a complex relationship between interpreter and interpreted. Similar to Heidegger (1927), he states that we can only really know our pre-conceptions once interpretation is underway.

He asserts that our values, beliefs, assumptions etc. are framed by our particular sphere of understanding which he calls our horizons. This dialogue between researcher and participant creates a double hermeneutic (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p.51), where the researcher interprets the participant interpreting his/her experience. It highlights the limitations of our embeddedness and the complexity of interpretation that is particularly relevant to IPA, a method that is explicitly concerned with the relationship between self and other.

When these horizons overlap there is also potential for me to make myself understood as well as to understand the other. Gadamer (1975) builds on Heidegger's (1927) idea that we can come to know our pre-understandings *while* engaging with the data. When this happens we are able to re-adjust them and then allow these new understandings to generate new questions and further understanding (Moran, 2000; Smith et al., 2009). The relevance of this

to the present study and IPA was its reminder to remain open to preconceptions emerging *during* the process of engaging with the new. The circularity of this process of questioning, uncovering meaning, and using this insight to inform further questioning is known as the hermeneutic circle (Moran, 2000; Smith, 2007). I make explicit, in the subsection titled 'Reflexivity' within this chapter, the assumptions I brought to the research process and how I endeavoured to keep the influences of these to a minimum.

Bracketing is seen as a means for evolving pre-conceptions while engaging with the hermeneutic circle (Finlay, 2011). By knowing what I was bringing to the process, I hoped to say something about what was actually there. For instance, since I experienced similar anxieties around the safety of the world following my experience of homicide, I needed to be sure that I did not assume similarities in experience where similarities were not present. For instance, I had found comfort in those who shared in the experience whereas my participant did not. When I noticed this divergence, I sought clarification to understand her experience better. Doing this uncovered the feelings of betrayal which lay beneath her desire to grieve privately. It also brought to focus the importance of the co-dependency between phenomenology and interpretation (Smith et al., 2009) and the notion that what emerged during the process was co-created by the participant and myself as researcher.

## **15 Alternative Methods of Analysis**

I considered a number of methods of analysis before deciding on IPA. The two other methods which I most closely considered were Grounded Theory and

Discourse Analysis. I will discuss these within this section, offering my reasoning for finally selecting IPA.

## 15.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was a possible method to adopt for this study because like IPA, it looks to answer questions about how people make sense of a phenomenon. It emerged in the 1960s from sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967) and had the aim of researching and describing social processes in the social sciences. Its focus was to use data to develop theories which were specific to the context in which they had emerged (Willig, 2001). Many forms of Grounded Theory exist, such as full (data collection and analysis) and abbreviated (coding of data only) forms, and those with empiricist/realist versus social constructionist (Charmaz, 2003; Langdrige, 2004) orientations. The original aim of the method was to develop theories out of data. This particular type of grounded theory is criticized for failing to pay sufficient attention to the role of the researcher (Willig, 2008). Social constructionist versions (Charmaz, 1995) attempt to address these criticisms by developing a more reflexive Grounded Theory.

Data collection can involve interviewing, participant observation, focus groups, or diaries, and sometimes combinations of these. Data collection and analysis is carried out simultaneously with the researcher moving back and forth between collection and analysis through what is known as 'theoretical sampling'. Analysis aims for saturation, meaning further analysis would not bring up new themes. This is unlike IPA which is iterative and therefore new themes can always be found. Grounded Theory seeks to offer a model or theory



based on its findings, claiming the ability to generalise based on theoretical saturation and its large heterogeneous samples. The implication of this is that there is emphasis on the group over the individual.

My decision to adopt IPA was based on my interest and belief in the importance of the idiographic as well as the general. Counselling psychology, with its roots in the phenomenological tradition stresses an appreciation of individuality, subjectivity, and uniqueness over sameness. An appreciation of these within bereavement research is especially important since previous theories that have attempted to standardize the process of grief into fixed stages have been criticised (eg. Stroebe et al. 2001; Neimeyer, 1998). It is hoped that a better understanding of the range of experience following traumatic bereavement will inform better clinical practice.

## **15.2 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis arose in the 1980s and is based on textual data. It is viewed not as a method or an approach to qualitative research but rather an approach to psychology and knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It tends to be interested in the socially patterned meanings with which we make sense of a particular phenomenon and/or the implications of varying versions of this. It is typically constructionist (Burr, 1995; 2003) meaning that it is concerned with how language constructs reality rather than reflects it, but may also be conducted within critical realist ontology (Sims-Schouten et al., 2007). From this latter position, I could have adopted discourse analysis for this project.

The two main branches of this approach are Discursive Psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis (Drew, 2008; Willig, 2008). Sampling uses text

based data and analysis tends to be very detailed. Discursive approaches analyse how people use words and language to achieve things, whereas Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1969) focuses on the power elements of language (ie. how words can be used to construct the social world and hold power over societies conduct). The write-up tends to be presented in a narrative style and results aim to be generalizable across speakers.

The main similarity between Discourse Analysis and IPA is a focus on linguistics. However, Discourse Analysis uses linguistics to assess how people construct accounts of experience and looks at linguistic resources that participants use and/or conventional features occurring whilst giving the account (Smith, 2011), rather than seeking to understand the nature of the phenomenon. This was not considered appropriate for this study as I was looking to understand the experience of moving through traumatic bereavement. IPA was considered more suitable since it does not use linguistics to comment on social processes, but rather to understand how participants make sense of their experience. It also uses cognitive and affective reactions because of this emphasis. Discourse analysis was also considered inappropriate because it takes a social constructionist epistemology, thus relying on culturally homogenous samples and a shared contextual understanding of language, which I felt would under emphasize personal meaning making. IPA fits more appropriately with my interests and the type of knowledge I was interested in obtaining.

## **16 Quality in IPA: A critical assessment**

Along the spectrum of descriptive to hermeneutic phenomenologies, IPA sits somewhat uncomfortably in the middle. It thus comes under criticism from both sides but accepts this uncomfortable position and is quite clear about it, arguing that the varying philosophies it incorporates are complementary rather than competitive. For example, IPA comes under criticism from Giorgi (2010) who says it is not phenomenological because of its interpretive elements and methodical flexibility. He criticizes the method as unscientific. Smith (2010, p. 186–191) addresses this criticism by highlighting that IPA is focussed on how participants make meaning of their worlds and that it adopts a view of human beings as always in relationship. Consequently, ‘any discoveries that we make must necessarily be a function of the relationship that pertains between researcher and subject-matter’ (Larkin, Watts, Clifton, 2006, p. 107) which is the basis for IPA’s aim to describe experience as it is interpreted by participant *and* researcher. This is why analysis is seen to continue even through the write up stage (Smith et al., 2009). Extending this even further, Smith argues that the method was ‘developed specifically in order to allow the researcher to produce a theoretical framework which is based upon but which transcends and exceeds the participants’ own terminology and conceptualizations’ (Smith in Larkin, Watts, Clifton, 2006, p. 113-114). I argue that IPA *is* phenomenological in its aim to explore individuals’ accounts of an experience rather than attempting to discover some objective truth about it. It does not attempt to be scientific or to reach invariant structures. However, given its emphasis on interpretation it is true that it is not Husserlian in its approach to phenomenology. It is also phenomenological in its adoption of the phenomenological attitude.

I am aware of the criticisms directed towards IPA and accept its limitations. It is not a perfect method which produces perfect results but its epistemological and ontological positions are accepting of this. I consider Giorgi's (2010) criticism to be important and have thus endeavoured to address it by being clear about my method and how I have arrived at the findings of this study. With the criticisms directed at it and its limitations in mind, I also engaged with guidelines set out for producing a good quality project in order to bolster the validity of my IPA.

### **16.1 Quality in Qualitative Research**

A large surge in qualitative research (Elliot, Fischer & Rennie, 1999) has also seen large variations in the way it has been carried out. This led to a call for guidelines determining what constitutes good qualitative methodology (Elliot et al., 1999). Although not specific to IPA, I engaged with Elliot et al.'s (1999) generic qualitative criteria to support the credibility of my project. The criteria suggest:

- 1) Owning one's perspective
- 2) Situating the sample and therefore the interviews
- 3) Grounding interpretations and statements in examples
- 4) Carrying out credibility checks
- 5) Demonstrating coherence in the data eg. through provision of a model or map
- 6) General vs. specific research tasks
- 7) Resonating with the researcher who brings to life the experience of the participant through interpretations

The criterion that I did not find suitable for my research was the suggestion of credibility checks to verify accuracy of the data. Bearing in mind the already existing double hermeneutic I felt that asking participants to verify my interpretations would introduce yet another level of interpretation, thereby creating a triple hermeneutic. Furthermore, IPA holds that what emerges during interviews is particular to the context, time, and dynamic in which it occurred, and that returning to verify this at a later date would not be appropriate. Data could be compromised if participants are given time to reconsider and edit their experience as it was expressed at the time of the interview.

I also engaged with Yardley's (2000) four main criteria for qualitative research in the following way:

- 1) Sensitivity to context - I attempted to pay close attention to context, bearing in mind the relevant theoretical base (method, methodology, epistemology etc.), cultural setting, interview setting, rapport with participants, participant perspectives and ethical issues. I believe I also addressed this through my on-going commitment to reflexivity.
- 2) Commitment to rigour - I engaged in IPA groups and extra training with the aim of improving my competence as a researcher and improving the rigour of my research. I have also endeavoured to be thorough in my data collection (which I feel was facilitated by psychotherapy training), and paid close attention to the depth/breadth of my analysis.
- 3) Coherence and transparency - I have attempted to be totally transparent about how I undertook my research method (procedures, selection criteria, design), and attempted to pay close attention to coherence of this thesis as a whole. It is important to note that coherence refers to

clarity of the analysis rather than an absence of contradictions in data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

- 4) Impact and importance - I hoped to point to the impact and importance of this research on theory and/or practice particularly within the field of counselling psychology

While I engaged with the above criteria I was also mindful not to overlook the theoretical underpinnings of IPA or the content and meaning of my data by sticking too rigidly to them. I was mindful not to fall into 'methodolatry' (Chamberlain, 2000, pg. 286) and method fetishism (Danziger, 1994a, pg. 6). I have held in my awareness the way that sticking rigidly to steadfast rules for method procedures can be limiting and reduce the quality of qualitative research.

## 16.2 A Good Quality IPA

More specific to my chosen method, I engaged with IPA quality criteria (Smith, 2011) and aimed to produce a 'good quality' IPA. This meant clearly subscribing to the theoretical principles of IPA (phenomenological, hermeneutic, and idiographic), being transparent about the research process, and offering a coherent, plausible, and interesting analysis.

The criteria call for sufficient sampling from the corpus to show a density of evidence for each theme. In a sample of 4- 8, extracts from at least 3 participants are required from each theme. It is important to bear in mind that IPA was initially written for health psychology papers thus making prevalence of themes more important. Prevalence is traditionally not emphasized in

qualitative research. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the importance of a theme is not purely its prevalence but whether it provides meaningful and useful information in relation to the research question. I generally looked to have 4 or 5 quotes to back up a theme in order to remain grounded in the data.

## **17 Design**

### **17.1 Ethical Approval and recruiting the sample**

I applied for ethical approval from NSPC and Middlesex University (Appendix 1). Once I received Ethical Clearance (Appendix 2), I advertised for participants via poster adverts (Appendix 3) circulated in hard copy and via emails and Facebook.

All correspondence was done via email. Participants responded to the poster via email providing details which enabled me to assess qualification for participation. Where this was either unclear or not included, I asked for confirmation in my response. Potential participants were also sent the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent form via email. If the individual agreed to participate and they fit the criteria, a mutually convenient date and time was arranged for the interview. For those who did not qualify (this was in each case due to the volunteer being above the upper age band), a list of contacts for therapeutic assistance was provided and the participant was thanked for offering to participate.

### **17.2 The Sample**

Using IPA meant that it was important for my sample to be purposive and homogenous. The criteria specified that participants:

- 1) Suddenly and unexpectedly (without *any* forewarning) lost a close friend, partner, or family member
- 2) Were at least 21 years old when they experienced their loss
- 3) Experienced the loss at least two years ago
- 4) Were a maximum age of 50 at the time of interviews
- 5) Had some therapeutic assistance following their loss

The demographics of the sample interviewed are illustrated in the table:

Participant	Gender	Current Age	Years since bereavement	Relationship of deceased to bereaved	Mode of death
Yvonne	F	43	18	Father	Suicide
Lucky	F	39	8	Aunt	Homicide
Kay	F	48	4	Son	Suicide
Ben	M	38	11	Father	Heart attack
Laura	F	50	2 ½	Niece	Suicide
Zoe	F	44	20	Brother	Suicide
Sally	F	33	3	Partner	Suicide

**Table 1: Sample demographics**

I identified my homogeneity thread by first clarifying my definition of traumatic bereavement both in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria. I used the definition as defined by Parkes et al. (1997) which states that traumatic bereavement is the sudden or unexpected loss of a close friend, partner, or



family member, potentially but not necessarily in violent or horrific circumstances. Although I wanted a homogenous sample I did not specify the mode of death. Though research does say that this has implications on the experience of traumatic bereavement (Malkinson et al., 2000; Rubin et al, 2000), this research was more interested in the broader experience of traumatic bereavement and its common existential themes. Pearlman and colleagues (2014) state that studies which have compared the impact of modes of death have found fewer differences than expected but argue that it is nevertheless important to provide information about the psychological ramifications of distinct modes of death. This provides further support for the use of IPA, which with its idiographic focus allowed for any themes which were particular to a specific mode of death to emerge in addition to common existential themes.

IPA benefits from a concentrated focus on a small number of participants as this allows for an in-depth understanding of the experience of living through traumatic bereavement. I hoped to recruit 8-10 participants in order to allow for drop outs and still have 6-8 interviews. I felt that my sample size of 7 would allow for enough depth of analysis to identify convergences and divergences in the data.

I did not further define the terms of the relationship to the deceased such as 'close friend' since I felt that this should be defined based on participants' experience of closeness. I excluded the loss of loved ones who were suddenly diagnosed with terminal illness, as I was interested in investigating the phenomenon when it was entirely without forewarning.

Being less interested in the developmental aspect of traumatic bereavement I included a lower age limit in order to investigate the phenomenon as experienced by adults. I included an upper age limit of 50 years in order to further homogenize the sample, thus investigating the experience among pre-midlife adults only.

Participants were required to have experienced their loss at least two years prior to participation since according to the Royal College of Psychiatry (2015), most will 'recover', from a major bereavement within one or two years. While such conceptualizations may be contested from the point of view of current theoretical perspectives, this time frame was nevertheless adopted from an ethical perspective to minimize harm to participants. Similarly, it was required that participants had received some therapeutic assistance following their loss. This was also included in the selection criteria to minimize potential harm, since it was less likely that unexamined and distressing thoughts or feelings would arise during the interviews. Bearing in mind the debates around pathologising or treating grief and literature around post-traumatic growth, this aspect of the criterion also ensured that individuals who participated were individuals who felt that they needed therapeutic assistance.

### **17.3 Limitations of the study: critical reflections on the sample**

Based on the criterion, the time between bereavement and participation could have been as much as 30 years for one participant and 2 years for another.

Prior to analysis, this was viewed as a potential limitation since participants may have interpreted their experience differently based on the time elapsed between bereavement and the interview. The concern was that a participant who was bereaved 20 years ago would have had significantly more time to understand or make some meaning out of their loss than one who was bereaved 2 years ago. However, although this made sense on an intuitive level, analysis found that time between bereavement and interview was not indicative of meaning made or integration of loss. Another consideration with regards to time elapsed since bereavement, however, is the inherent difficulty in recollection and interpretation of experience. For participants who had a greater time elapsed between bereavement and interview, a greater extent of recollection and interpretation was required. It would therefore be useful to conduct research with a closer homogeneity thread with regards to time since bereavement. Interviews closer to the time of traumatic bereavement would perhaps offer a more immediate account of the experience and interviews taken some time later could offer insight into personal meaning making over time.

Small sample sizes were used in order to elicit rich and detailed accounts of experience. The implication of such in-depth analysis was a corresponding lack of breadth. Sampling was also purposive and homogenous so the findings are idiographic. This means the present study can only make claims about the group that was studied and can make no claims of generalizability (Langdrige, 2007, p.58). This was a dilemma because I was interested in the broader experience of traumatic bereavement. I wanted to be able to say something about the psychological journey of those who endured it and to say something about how the findings of the study could inform clinical practice. But while I do

not make claims beyond the sample in the present study, I also believe that it is possible that if a specific experience is present in one location, it is likely it exists in other locations (Smith, 2004; Haug, 1987; Harre, 1979). Given the dearth in similar qualitative studies, further studies are encouraged to more firmly establish common existential themes. At a later stage, quantitative studies utilizing heterogeneous samples would be useful to verify the validity and generalizability of the findings.

That clients had therapy may also be viewed as a limitation since this will likely have influenced their experience and understanding of traumatic bereavement. However, including this as part of the selection criteria ensured that participants felt they needed assistance in moving through their grief. This meant that the findings could provide relevant insights into clinical practice. It was also included on ethical grounds to prevent unexamined issues from arising during the interviews and causing distress or harm to participants. I needed to negotiate between methodological purity and ethical soundness, and in this case opted for the latter. To manage for this, I designed the interview schedule to ensure that the data was not about how therapy helped participants to move through their loss but elicited information which spoke directly to the experience of traumatic bereavement. For instance, questions sought insight into the embodied experience of grief. Others, such as 'what (if anything) did you find consoling/helpful in moving through traumatic bereavement' allowed participants to talk about therapy if it felt important to do so. Questions that sought to understand how loss was integrated, whether meaning was made, and how participants viewed themselves as changed following loss, however, were likely to have been influenced by therapy. As a result, caution should be

exercised in extending or generalizing the findings beyond the present sample. It would be useful to conduct a similar study in a sample that did not receive therapy to find out whether the findings can be verified across broader groups. These limitations of the study mean that generalizability on the whole, in line with IPA, is not possible. However, a degree of 'naturalistic generalisation' (insight from detailed descriptions of individual cases) and 'theoretical transferability' (a degree of transferability of findings from this sample to greater populations) is possible.

## 18 Reflexivity

The influence of Heidegger's existential phenomenology which is centred on the Being-in-the-world nature of human existence, and Gadamer's horizons (which both help and hinder the research process), provide strong support for the importance of interpretation, and therefore reflexivity, in IPA. In undertaking IPA, a tension existed between allowing for my own perspectives, interpretations, and influences, and needing to remain grounded in the data.

From a counselling psychology perspective, practitioners affect the therapy process. More generally, experience is seen to be co-created and thus context influences experience. This means that while the scientist-practitioner model is an integral part of the counselling psychologist identity (Kennedy & Llewelyn, 2001), the profession argues for an identity that is also aware of context and is interested in subjective truths as well as empirical research findings. Consequently, it also adopts the identity of 'reflective practitioner' (Schon, 1983), acknowledging the importance of self-knowledge. This fits with the

present context, where the researcher is believed to influence the research process.

Reflexivity refers to both 'functional reflexivity' and 'personal reflexivity' (Wilkinson, 1988). The former refers to critical reflection of the research *process*, which I hope is apparent throughout this chapter. The latter involves reflecting on one's own role as researcher and may be viewed in terms of turning my gaze back onto myself (Shaw, 2010; McLeod, 2001, p.195). It requires an awareness of the influences of my relationship to the research topic and its participants, and recognises that these influences will inform my personal, cultural, professional, theoretical and philosophical constructs, which will in turn, guide my interactions with the data and analysis (Etherington, 2004). Finlay (2005), influenced by Gadamer (1975), refers to such 'hermeneutic reflection' as continually reflecting on our experience as researchers alongside the phenomenon being studied, asserting that it allows us to move beyond the partiality and investments of our previous understandings. She (Finlay, 2008) calls for a continual engagement with the phenomenological attitude in managing the intrusions of pre-understandings, describing a 'dance' between reduction and reflexivity.

Given this importance of reflexivity, I have attempted to be mindful of and bracket my own pre-suppositions throughout the research process. I attempt to make these explicit below.

I am a 30 year old female counselling psychologist trainee undertaking my first qualitative research project. I have an undergraduate degree in psychology, which means that my research background has been heavily focussed on

quantitative methodology. While I had always felt that psychology was the best area of study for me, due to my interest in human behaviour and experience, I found that discussion around topics I found interesting stopped short of the type of depth I was looking for. The need for being scientific seemed to prevent exploration of human being in the way that I found important and interesting. I wanted to understand experience in all of its richness. Consequently, discovering qualitative research was very exciting for me. My introduction to research having been quantitative, however, means that making myself visible in the research process did not come naturally.

I am of mixed heritage with my father being Sri Lankan and my mother being Jamaican. I grew up predominantly in Sri Lanka, although I spent short spells of time going to school in Jamaica and 9 years living in the UK as an adult. My upbringing did not stick rigidly to any particular culture and my life in general has been culturally mixed. Sri Lanka is diverse in many ways including ethnicity, race and religion. In addition, I have been privileged to have attended private international schools which exposed me to further diversity of culture and range of experience. This has meant that I do not identify entirely with one culture, but would say that I strongly identify with *some* aspects of *some* cultures, and thus have been aware of a resistance to being labelled as either/or, without appreciation for the multitude of factors that go towards my individuality and sense of self. I believe that these aspects of my background are at the root of my interest in subject experience and my scepticism around attempting to generalise. Since I consider this mixed background to be a 'privilege', I bring to this research my assumption that difference is to be expected and such diversity is to be celebrated.

Growing up in Sri Lanka has also meant that I have been exposed to poverty and suffering from an early age. With my father being a doctor and my mother a social worker, social responsibility and a concern for human health, wellbeing, and living were always given great importance and without a doubt played a part in my choice of vocation.

Growing up during an era of civil war and guerrilla warfare meant that the knowledge that loved ones can suddenly and unexpectedly die became a reality from a very young age. As a result, the idea that ‘...love is par excellence the fact that the death of the other affects me more than my own’ (Levinas, as cited in Stolorow, 2014) resonates very strongly with me. It is this sensitivity to the pain of traumatically bereaved individuals which fed my investment in this topic.

I have been traumatically bereaved of close friends, which gives me ‘insider status’ (Gallais, 2008) to the phenomenon. I have *some* understanding of how individuals might feel following traumatic bereavement. When a friend at the age of 14 lost both of his parents, his only sister, and his only grandparent in a car crash, I became uncomfortably aware of the fragility and unpredictability of life. I became very aware and concerned for those I was closest to. Some years later when a friend was killed by her sister’s boyfriend at the age of 18, I was reminded again of these feelings. The world felt unsafe, unpredictable, and cruel. I remember after the second instance, my friends and I drew closer than ever. We spent all of our time with one another, often trying to digest and make sense of what happened, and finding comfort in our shared experience. I could not understand how such loss was endured, and I did not know how I could be of any assistance in these situations.



While conducting this research, I also lost a close friend to suicide. I found myself utterly shocked and very deeply saddened. I tried to make sense of his decision to end his life, and questioned how I might have prevented it. Once again, comfort came from friends who shared most closely in this experience. Honouring him through remembrances and charity projects which were close to his heart has been an important part of making the transition from loving him in presence to loving him in absence.

However, ‘...not only is [bereavement] painful to experience but it is also painful to witness, if only because we are so impotent to help’ Bowlby (1980, p.7). While I am aware of my own struggle with losing close friends, it is witnessing the pain of those who have been traumatically bereaved of their family members which was the strongest influence on my investment in this topic. While I have ‘insider status’ to the traumatic bereavement of close friends, I also bring to this research a sense that I am very far from understanding the participants’ experience since they all lost either a partner or family member. I am therefore aware that I undertook this research as part of a broader meaning-making process and a desire to address my own feelings of ‘impotency to help’. This also implies a hierarchy within traumatic bereavements where some may be more painful and difficult to move through than others.

Over the years, this area of personal significance and concern has developed into one of academic interest and a growing appreciation of death as a topic of great existential importance. In this regard, I hope that by understanding the experience of traumatic bereavement, I may be able to contribute to assisting those who endure it.

It was not until I was in university at the undergraduate level that I found existentialism. Its concrete interest in human existence and the existential themes of freedom, choice, responsibility and courage immediately resonated with my inclinations and worldview. The implications of my philosophical allegiance are that I bring to the research assumptions around the importance of subjective meaning making and human finitude (becoming aware of one's mortality following traumatic bereavement), as well as a tendency to avoid pathologising, categorizing or labelling of individuals.

I attempted to achieve the phenomenological attitude from the start of the research process. To do this, I spent a considerable amount of time attempting to expand my personal awareness through reflexivity. I attempted to identify my basic understandings of traumatic bereavement by journaling my thoughts, assumptions, questions, biases, and feelings around the topic at the start of the research project and revisited this exercise regularly to track any changes or modifications. I also engaged in real time discussions with peers and others, as well as my personal therapy which helped to bring out my biases and assumptions. I did a self-interview using my interview schedule, putting myself in the position of my participants, in order to find out what my assumptions were, and I included these in my journal along with the other ideas, questions, reflections, observations, decisions, and conversations I had noted from the start of the research process. By adopting the phenomenological attitude in this way via journalling, real-time discussions, a peer email group, and a self-interview of the interview schedule, I was able to bracket my assumptions when engaging with the data. This was particularly important during interviews, analysis, and the write-up. Bracketing involved suspending – as opposed to

obliterating – my personal influences. It means that I held my assumptions in mind in such a way that I was aware of them but they did not obstruct my view of the phenomenon. By knowing what I brought to the process, I was able to say something about what was actually there.

Some of the assumptions I was aware of, for instance, included the idea that there was comfort to be sought in shared experience. I was also aware of my belief that the pathologising of grief should be avoided, a product both of my background and my training in psychotherapy and counselling psychology. During analysis I noted personal thoughts and associations alongside data on the interview transcripts. Throughout the research process, I was also part of an email group which was created among close colleagues. It was setup as a forum for dialogue around members' research and counselling psychology in general, and included Skype discussions where more in-depth exploration was needed. All of this allowed continual reflection and engagement with the hermeneutic circle and helped me to stay connected to the phenomenological element of IPA. These were particularly important in terms of the process of data collection and analysis and helped me to let go of working with anything that I was trying/hoping/expecting to find and to monitor any tendency to direct and restrict participant data. For instance, I became aware of not wanting to include themes which showed participants in a less than positive light such as cases where there appeared to be a lesser degree of adaptation to loss, evidence of continued turning away from grief, or lesser degrees of post traumatic growth.

This tendency was arising from a desire to protect my participants. I was concerned about the way that participants would feel if they read the study and

how it might impact on their personal journeys. It is this which was often behind my hesitation in interrogating the data and introducing the interpretive element of IPA. It drew to my attention my difficulty in making a shift from the role of psychotherapist to the role of researcher and the ways in which the roles differed. I identified this as restricting the data and potentially jeopardizing the validity of my findings and stayed vigilant to this tendency by continual engagement with my therapy, supervisors, journal, the mailing group, and thus continual engagement with the hermeneutic circle. My supervisors looked at my interview analyses which helped me to monitor my balance between allowing for some interpretation while remaining grounded in the data. I was also mindful to take a relational and empathic stance at all times, which I was advised would facilitate me in making difficult assertions in a sensitive manner. I adopted a position of 'empathic openness' allowing myself to be guided by a genuine curiosity, empathy, and compassion. This had been useful to my psychotherapy practice and assisted me greatly in this regard through the research process too. I needed, however, to be mindful not to slip into my more familiar role as psychotherapist in terms of my interventions during interviews but to keep my focus on asking questions that would elicit the information I sought.

I was also aware of how emotionally moved I was by the material shared by participants so it was important to use my journal for reflection, maintain dialogue with my colleagues and use my personal therapy to ensure that my emotional responses did not alter the findings of the study.

I have tried to be as clear, transparent, and informative as possible, weaving my reflections throughout this write-up. I hope that making explicit my background, my personal experiences of traumatic bereavement, and my

sense of being 'impotent to help' illustrate the way that my pre-understandings influenced my epistemology, ontology, and the way that I created, designed, and conducted the research. I hope that I have demonstrated the way that I reflected on the analytical process. In the discussion section I have tried to be transparent about how I have been implicated in the research process and how the research has changed me and my understanding of the topic. In doing this I have hoped to add rigour to this research project.

## **19 Interviews**

I used semi-structured interviews for my research since they enable participants to offer rich, detailed, first person accounts of their experience and are considered the exemplar for IPA (Smith et al., 2009). Sometimes referred to as interview guides (Patton, 2002), they are flexible in that they allow the precise wording and order of questions to be contextual and responsive to the participant's developing account (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This felt crucially important to me as I was keen for the interviews to be participant led to the greatest extent possible, since individual experience was the crux of my research question and my chosen method. This data collection method allowed engagement with the hermeneutic circle and allowed unanticipated topics to come up, providing me with opportunities to be confronted with the new and to revise my fore-understandings around the topic. Unstructured interviews would have allowed for this to an even greater extent, but I opted for semi-structured interviews because they allowed the process to be as participant led as possible, while still ensuring that the research question was answered. Being

my first research project, I wanted to ensure that I obtained data which would speak to the central question.

### 19.1 Interview Schedule

I prepared an interview schedule to ensure consistency of questions across all participants. Trust and rapport are considered to be crucial for generating rich and detailed accounts of individual experience (Braun & Clarke, 2012) and this was going to be crucial to my data collection since my research question is a particularly sensitive and personal one. I knew that a good interview guide would assist me in building rapport and trust with participants, so I spent a considerable amount of time formulating and re-formulating it. I wanted the interview to feel conversational, albeit a predominantly one-sided conversation. I wanted to find a balance between guiding and being led, and thus aimed to ask questions which allowed participants to set the parameters of the topic (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

I tried to ensure that my questions were broad, open and neutral, and that each question included some prompts. I memorized these questions prior to the interview so that I could be flexible with their order and wording to help the process feel organic and for questions to follow one another logically. As well as the main questions, I prepared some prompts and probes to assist in expanding or opening out initial responses. At times, I used non-verbal probes to encourage further detail from participants. I was also mindful not to ask too many questions as I was aware that this could restrict participant data and begin to feel more like a structured interview.

I began by brainstorming a list of questions and themes relating to the areas I am interested in (Smith, 1995) and then thought about specific questions around each theme. I thought in terms of central and sub questions (prompts), attempting to ask open rather than directional ones. I was keen to ask an introductory question which would allow the participant to introduce themselves and ease themselves into the 'conversation', and I was equally keen to wrap up the interview with a question that would allow participants to raise issues that had not come up. For each question, I asked myself the following questions, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2013):

- 1) What am I trying to find out and will this question generate that information?
- 2) Does this question help me to answer my research question?
- 3) What would it feel like if I was asked this question?
- 4) Are there (problematic) assumptions embedded in this question?
- 5) How might participants from different backgrounds feel if asked this question?
- 6) Is this question likely to be meaningful to my participant group?

I went through the interview schedule with peers and others to test their clarity, level of difficulty, wording/tone, and for other feedback (Smith, 1995), and remained open to modifying and adapting it even once data collection had begun.





**The interview schedule:**

Question	Aim (what am I trying to find out?)	Reflections on my expectations	Potential problems	Prompts/expanders
I very much appreciate your agreeing to take part in this research. To start, could you tell me what encouraged you to volunteer?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Motivation to participate may influence what/how experience is shared</li> <li>2) Starting with a more general question for participant can ease into the conversation</li> </ol>	Participants may talk about continued relationship with deceased, helping academia, desire to talk, bad, an axe to grind (eg: bad experiences with treatment)		
Could you tell me about your loss in terms of who you lost and the circumstances around it?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Obtaining facts of situation</li> <li>2) Giving participant a chance to say what happened and give a context before talking about experience/what it was like</li> <li>3) How long ago it happened, relationship to deceased, age when it happened, profession</li> </ol>	This may begin to answer other questions in the interview.	Assumption that context is important to connection and understanding	'How long ago did this happen?' (a closed question but time may be an important factor. Ok with this assumption, lit supports it). Relationship to deceased? Also need to find out age when it happened, how long ago, profession etc...
What was your immediate response upon finding out?	To understand the most salient aspects of the experience, upon finding out.	Perhaps experience will be placed within the 4 dimensions, perhaps shock,	What time span am I interested in? First few days? The very	Prompts: How did it feel? What did it mean to you? How long did that stay with you? What was going on for you in your mind/body?

		some physical response...	day? Do I specify this? I chose to enquire into the moment of finding out and allowed participants to define personal time frames thereafter (ie: how long 'immediate' lasted)	What is it like to tell me now?
What was it like for you to be around other people?	I want to know about the social dimension. Understanding how others are experienced gives insight to the phenomenon and may provide insight into how the bereaved might be supported. What can other people, including practitioners, offer?	I feel that others will be an important part of the experience whether positive or negative. Culture may be important.		And did that change at all, over time? How did it change?
What, if anything, did you find consoling during this time?	To find out what people need during this time which helps them to move through the pain. Understanding this can inform treatment plans	May link with above question but extend beyond other people	May not have found anything consoling which builds on feelings of alienation	What do you feel enabled you to keep living/move through the grief? How did you accommodate the pain? What was that like? What would you have preferred?
What role, if any, did your religious or spiritual beliefs play in your experience?	I am interested in the spiritual dimension	May have found spirituality or religiosity useful or it may have	May not have had any impact	How have your religious or spiritual beliefs/ideas helped or hindered your process? How have your

		brought up questions about beliefs. I hold an assumption that this dimension will be affected on some level		views/beliefs changed as a result of your experience?
In what way, if at all, do you feel this might have changed you as a person?	I am interested in process, perhaps sense making, how one 'gets through' the experience	I expect to see some change in perspective, worldview whether positive or negative	May not have had any impact	Are you different in any way? Do you think about/see things differently?
How has this had an impact on how you live now?	I'm investigating potential for growth or development/maintenance of challenges. How does any change described in the previous question, manifest behaviourally?	People may have made significant changes to the way that they live as a result of the experience, and linked with the previous question about how they have changed as a person.	I am expecting that there has been some positive change, but there may be none, or change may be viewed as negative	Do you live differently now?
Is there anything which hasn't come up, which you would like to add about your experience of being	Attempting to investigate areas which I had not considered.		I suspect that there will be things which participants want to introduce newly or stress on areas	Was there anything you expected to be asked about, which I did not ask?

traumatically bereaved?			previously talked about	
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I paid special attention to preparation for the interview. In particular I ensured that I had all the necessary equipment in good working order, since I was aware of my own anxiety around the logistics of using recording equipment. I prepared my opening for the interview and hoped this would help to put participants at ease and facilitate building a good rapport with them. I had been aware of my interaction with participants from the first point of contact where building rapport was concerned.

## 19.2 Conducting the Interviews

When participants first entered the interview room I let them know that the recorders were not on yet and asked them how they were feeling. I was concerned that if the tape recorder had been out on display from the moment the participant entered the room, that they may feel uneasy by its presence. I allowed for a few moments of conversation, to help them to feel settled, before asking them whether I could turn the recorders on and begin the interview process.

I began by thanking participants for agreeing to take part in the study. I let them know before the interview began that the process would be somewhat of a one-sided conversation with only a few questions from me, so that they would feel free to talk as little or as much as they wanted. While I did not set a precise duration for the interview, I suggested an approximate time frame of 60 - 90 minutes. I also made it clear that I had no agenda and that there were no right or wrong answers but that I was purely interested in their lived experience. I also mentioned that I may ask questions that seem to have obvious answers, but that I would need to ask them in order to ensure I made no assumptions.

Before the interview began, I asked participants to re-read the information sheet (Appendix 4). I reminded them that data would be anonymised and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I let them know that recordings would be destroyed after 5 years, that transcripts may be seen by another colleague once anonymised, that the results may be published in academic journals or other articles, and that they can receive a group analysis of the results should they wish to. Following verbal agreement, I ask them to sign two consent forms (Appendix 5). I then carried out a risk assessment (Appendix 6) to monitor and manage any potential risk.

I was keen to distinguish the interview from a therapy session, and thus reminded participants that if any sensitive issues arose during the interview, that I would signpost them to appropriate assistance afterwards.

I felt that my background as a psychotherapist and counseling psychologist trainee assisted me in the interview process. I felt fairly comfortable with my ability to give space, listen, be empathically open, and hold a stance of naivety. I found that participants generally waited until the recorders were turned off before they commented more freely on the actual experience of the interview, but below is an excerpt which indicates good rapport between participant and myself:

P: It's really nice to meet you and I hope that you...
--

I: It's been so lovely to meet you as well... and I know that you said that there were things that you said in this interview which you haven't said many times and I really appreciate you sharing those things
P: You're welcome, it feels, it feels safe to do so...
I: Ok well I'm glad, I'm glad you've felt safe. Do you feel ok for me to turn these off?
P: Yes, certainly! I'd forgotten they were on!

Prior to the interviews I had considered how much self-disclosure I would allow for and decided that I would be prepared to disclose my reasons for choosing this particular research question. In any other instances I decided I would consider the intention of self-disclosure, and if it could help the interview process then I would follow through. I was aware that a degree of personal disclosure can help to establish rapport and challenge power dynamics (see Oakley, 1981). However, during this interview I found myself self-disclosing without first reflecting. I revealed to my participant, without thinking, that I shared some common ground with the person she lost. I feel this was a result of feeling I had a good rapport with the participant and my conscious effort to not play the role of psychotherapist. Fortunately the self-disclosure did not seem to hinder the process, but in fact seemed to be experienced positively by the participant, as the excerpt below shows:

P: Aw you're welcome... yeah, keep, keep that [photograph] I've got lots of those... keep that one so you can erm...
I: Oh wow! Are you sure?
P: Yeah, yeah definitely
I: Ah thank you, very much
P: You would have liked him if you met him, he was a real character.
I: I can say that I genuinely feel I would have as well
P: Yeah, no you would, especially if you're... you've got [commonality]. He could have talked to you about all sorts of [laughs]

One participant reported feeling anxious about the interview and uncomfortable in the interview room. The discussion around this took place before the recorders were turned on, but in the below excerpt I re-visit the conversation to check and manage any participant distress at the end of the interview:

I: Thank you for sharing all of that. Erm, I know that you were feeling quite anxious about it and a little bit uncomfortable and...
P: Yeah
I: ...In the surroundings and can I just check in with you now and see how, what you're feeling like?
P: Now, its, its fine... it was just strange cos at first was like 'where the hell am I?' [laughs]... got off the train... no its absolutely fine
I: Yeah?



P: Mm...
I: Ok I mean I haven't really got anything else to ask you so if you're happy to wrap up there then I am as well. Thank you for sharing that cos I know there were times when you said you hadn't talked about something for years and some things that you hadn't talked about at all and, so I really appreciate you sharing that... and also want to pick up on, on, there was a moment when you sort of thought 'I don't know whether this would be ok with [lost person]', and if that comes back for you then do let me know and...
P: Yeah
I: And, and do feel free to sort of withdraw at any time if you don't feel it's like the appropriate thing to do
P: Yeah, yeah

I had expected that participants might become distressed during interviews given the sensitive nature of the topic. During these times I allowed myself to move into a psychotherapist role in terms of adopting an empathic presence, providing a holding environment, and allowing for expression of distress while containing it within the context of the interview. I also made a point to acknowledge any distress that I noticed, checking whether participants felt okay enough to continue, such as in the below excerpt:

P: But it was nice that it was middle of the night because the children were asleep and it gave us time, it gave us time to think, you know. So erm, I told you I wouldn't be able to speak without crying [laughs]

I: No, but it's ok...

P: So my dad...

I: But just to let you know again if you do want to....

P: Yeah no, I'm fine, I am fine... I do I, I, do I think it's good to cry if you feel it coming

I: Yeah, I think so too

I was aware, however, of needing to monitor myself closely to ensure that I did not move entirely from the role of interviewer into the role of therapist. It was a boundary I needed to manage carefully. Although participants naturally experienced a degree of distress recalling their experience of traumatic bereavement, none experienced distress which was a cause for concern, or which required the interview to be stopped.

I had planned to monitor participant distress by offering regular breaks and making sure that participants knew they could ask for a break or stop the interview at any time. The interviews seemed to flow quite naturally and there did not seem to be clear occasions when breaks were needed, which meant that I offered them less than I had planned. On the whole, this did not seem to be problematic to

participants, but the excerpt below was the instance when I felt I had neglected to offer a break when I should have done so.

I: Yeah... wow. I realise that I haven't offered you any breaks can I just check how you're doing? Are you ok?

P: Yeah [sigh]... could I have a little break?

I: Yeah sure... yeah please do

P: Is that alright? It's such erm... it's quite... tiring...

I: It's a lot to talk about

P: It's like reliving it...

I: Yeah, yeah... would you like to have a little walk around or...?

P: Can I just go and get a cuppa? Can I have a caffeine hit?

I: Would you... I can get it for you or would you like the walk?

P: Yeah just a bit of fresh air if that's alright

I: Yeah absolutely

P: How much longer is about it?

I: Oh not long now just a few more minutes

P: Oh then I'll wait and have a cuppa before I see [therapist]

I was also aware of the manner in which power may be experienced in the interview process. With this in mind, I was especially careful around the exploitative potential of interviews and tried to minimize any perceived power. I did this by extending control to participants, for instance by letting them know that as well as my offering

breaks that they too could suggest a break – or indeed stop the interview - whenever they needed. I let them know that they could talk as little or as much as they liked, indicating that they were in control of what they chose to share. I also needed to hold in my awareness and be alert to the possibility that participants may view me as an expert on traumatic bereavement. It was important to address this and let participants know it was their experience I was interested in, rather than looking for specific responses. Below is an excerpt illustrating how I attempted to manage power dynamics and challenge any views of myself as an expert on the experience of traumatic bereavement:

I: Because I don't have that many questions I just wanna hear about your experience. I don't have an agenda, there's no right or wrong answers it's really just about trying to understand as best I can, what your experience was like, for you...
P: Ok
I: Erm, and... just... let me know if you need a break. I'll offer you a break
P: Mmm
I: A couple of times but if you're feeling like you need a break and I've not asked you then let me know as well...

I found that participants were well able to express and describe their experience leaving me with little need to use prompts or follow up with further questions. I found that I most often used non-verbal interventions such as 'mmm' or 'uhuh?' to either let participants know I was listening and to encourage further description

without being directive. This helped me to relate to participants in a phenomenological way. I still needed to remain alert, however, to slipping out of the phenomenological attitude. One of the most useful indicators of a shift into the natural attitude was a sense of surprise at something a participant was sharing. This was usually an indication of an unexamined assumption on my part.

I also needed to be mindful of when I interrupted the participant process since this too could alter the data. Below is an example of my catching myself interrupting the participant process and attempting to recover any data which might have otherwise been lost:

P: But my friends, I think, and other members of the family. Would, not tired of it, but, I got that feeling that people had had enough. You know, and that...

I: [Stopped myself from making an intervention when I noticed the participant was about to say something] Sorry... I've interrupted you...

P: Erm, I, I didn't really know what I was gonna say. You, I felt as though I couldn't... people had heard enough... that was my under... noone said that to me but that was my understanding... a few friends made comments about erm 'Come on, you need to start coming out again' or smiling again and... it made me, I was furious at those comments...

Finally, in my interview with Kay I omitted by accident, to ask her about the impact spirituality played in her experience. Although she mentioned spiritual exploration briefly, this was an area which could have been opened out further, particularly given the prominence of this theme in the findings of the study.

Overall, although I had been nervous about the interview process, indeed finding it challenging and identifying areas for improvement in the future, I was able to elicit a large amount of data, both in terms of volume and richness.

### **19.3 Interview Debrief**

During the interview debrief I asked participants how they found the interview and if there was anything they wanted to add, before asking them explicitly whether they were happy to end the interview and for the recording equipment to be stopped. This provided them with an opportunity to get off their chest anything which they felt was 'left over' from the interview. Since I also asked participants if they wanted to add anything about their experience which came up as a part of the interview, none had anything 'left over' which they wanted to address. The debrief also gave me an opportunity to check levels of distress before participants left the interview. I handed them a debrief letter (Appendix 10) putting all of this information in writing, and also handed them a contact sheet (Appendix 11) with contacts for psychotherapy that they may find useful following the interview. I then went over what would next happen to the data and what the intentions of the study were. Finally, I made sure to thank them for their participation.

### **19.4 Post Interviews**

Following each interview, I immediately wrote down any reflections, thoughts, feelings, opportunities or challenges that emerged for me during the process. I felt that I was able to elicit rich descriptions from all participants and was surprised by how little guidance and prompting was needed from me. I felt moved by the

participants' narratives and found it useful to note in my journal my own feelings of sadness and an appreciation of the difficulty of traumatic bereavement. Overall, I felt I had good rapport with participants but I had been aware of not making as strong a connection with one of the participants compared with others. This interview was conducted in a different room to the other interviews and the participant expressed feeling uncomfortable in the setting. I was aware of the participant's need to assure me that she was nevertheless okay, in a sense looking after me, which was something she described during the interview as having a tendency towards doing. The room was also very warm and there was noise from outside which I was concerned may have hindered the participant's process.

Engaging with the hermeneutic circle, I was aware of how my knowledge of the literature at times influenced the data. For instance, knowledge of the literature around the need for meaning influenced the following intervention:

I: Ok can you tell me a little bit about those, the ways that you might be different now?

P: I mean I'm not even sure if it's, if it's that but I suppose it, it, it, it, it led me into... a...er, well. I hate 'it led me'... I, had a big career change, and I started retraining from being a marketing manager in London, erm, in a private sector company to, moving into the civil service and trying to do something that was a bit more worthwhile, a bit more worthy a bit more erm, useful, a bit more... of something. I

was looking for something to do something that felt better than just designing adverts to sell people things that they didn't want

I: It was something which felt meaningful to you?

## 20 The Pilot

The pilot (interview with Participant 4) was useful because it enabled me to evaluate my interview schedule and interviewing skills. I was keen to notice when I interrupted, whether my interventions shut down or helped the process, and the way I followed or ignored interesting lines of enquiry.

On the whole I found that the interview questions seemed clear and needed little clarification. I rarely needed to use my prompts. The below excerpt however is an example of how I was directive in the delivery of my question, suggesting an answer to my question based on what had already been shared by the participant.

This was confusing for the participant:

I: Ok... I wonder how you were enabled to sort of accommodate that pain... I wonder whether this is something about sort of pushing it off and that was the way you accommodated it? Or tried to banish it rather?

P: Is it possible to explain that again?

I: Yeah, sure... I suppose I'm wondering how you managed to get through each day with this feeling that you're describing of really being quite depressed? And yet still managing to accommodate that pain and on some level move through that grief

P: Yeah... I don't know, is the short answer. But I think, it would have been about that... the blind spot I was talking about



In future interviews I was mindful to ask questions in a clearer fashion and to remain phenomenological without directing participant response. I feel that on the whole I was able to relate to my participant in a phenomenological manner, encouraging description of experience wherever possible:

P: Yeah it wasn't getting attention and I... I think I only had a week off work and I was back in work and... might have been two I don't think it was. Erm, and I was all at sea, I really was, I was erm... I can remember just that feeling of my, my brain swimming in its own kind of... floating in its own kind of juices really. I was very demotivated.

I: That's really powerful, your brain floating in its own juices. Can you sort of ... just describe a little bit more what was going on?

On the whole I was aware of times when I slipped into the natural attitude, and found I was able to catch myself before I made assumptions about what the participant was saying:

P: Erm, and I... I lose the clarity on what I actually did in those months afterwards. Erm, which says something in itself.

I: Yeah... Actually... erm... Actually can you put into words what you feel that says about your experience?

Towards the end of the interview I noticed myself becoming aware of the time and this prevented me from following up lines of enquiry which I would otherwise have

followed up. For instance, I was keen to understand more the participant's experience of being in a space which belonged to his loved one and being surrounded by his belongings:

P: Cos you're in everything with Dad... he was... I haven't really talked too much about him I suppose. Yeah he was erm, he was an unusual man and erm, had a very childish sense of humour and... so his study was full of little things that
I: Yeah
P: ...he found amusing and... so you're... there and you're kind of, you're in his space and er, where he died as well... he died in that room
I: Oh ok
P: Yeah so I mean, the word surreal is overused but it is...
I: Yeah

I noticed myself sticking quite rigidly to the schedule such that I would ask questions even when the question had already been addressed at a previous time. I believe this was due to nerves and a lack of confidence in steering away from the interview schedule as I had planned it. This meant that the participant sometimes had to repeat material. The following excerpt provides an example:

I: Ok, so and I think you've actually begun to talk about this but... what's with me at the moment is, erm... in what way would you say that you've changed as a person? I think you've sort of been talking about that but...
P: In, er... connecting it to the death of my dad?

I: To the loss of your father
P: Well... erm, yeah some repetition here but... it's kind of been peppered throughout the conversation hasn't it so I think... yeah the circumstances of his death and the fact of his death exaggerated tendencies that were already within me

In later interviews I was mindful of being more flexible with the schedule. I felt I did this quite well because in future interviews I did not always ask all of the questions explicitly when I felt they were addressed. However, allowing myself to move away from strict adherence to the schedule on one occasion led to an error. I neglected to ask one participant about how her religious or spiritual beliefs had an impact (if any) on her experience. This may have impacted my data since I may have missed a part of the participant's experience which was potentially significant.

I found that I was able to build good rapport with my participant. I had not asked for feedback but the participant commented that the interview was 'well presented' and 'well conducted'. He also reported that I offered him a break at just the right time, and that he felt at ease with me, adding that he sensed my 'capability as a therapist'. I felt that our rapport helped the overall flow of the interview and brought out some rich material for analysis.

## 21 Data Analysis

IPA offers guidelines for data analysis but emphasizes that these should be treated as flexible rather than prescriptive (Smith, 2011). However, since this was my first attempt at IPA, I decided to stick closely to the guidelines as set out by Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) as this helped me to be more rigorous and thorough in my approach. I was also keen to apply degree of 'analytic sensibility', interpreting data through the particular lens of my chosen method and allowing myself to go beyond obvious interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2013), thus producing a strong qualitative analysis.

I transcribed the interviews including as much detail as possible, including silences, stammers, laughs, and words, and using the key provided in the 'Anonymisation and transcription convention' section. I acknowledge this process as being subjective, however, since there is a degree of interpretation which occurs in converting audio data into words.

Once my data was transcribed, I analyzed each interview on a case by case basis. I placed each interview within a table in landscape format with a large margin on either side to make notes. I used the right side of the margin for exploratory coding and the left hand margin for noting emergent themes (Appendix 7) for an example transcript).

My first encounter with the text involved reading it while listening to the audio recording of the interview - as suggested in the guidelines - in order to keep the participant in focus while familiarizing myself with the data. I followed this up with several close and detailed readings of the transcript, always imagining the voice

of the participant. I was attempting to enter the participant's world through an active engagement with the data, attempting always to be responsive to it and remaining open to the new. To this end, I made notes in a separate book of any ideas, recollections of the interview, or interpretations that arose as I immersed myself in the data. I did this to ensure that these thoughts did not cloud my reading of the data and to prevent myself from making 'quick and dirty' reductions of it (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, pg. 82). Through this process I began to appreciate experientially the need to move between description and interpretation, as I moved towards fuller understanding of the participant's experience. The hermeneutic circle was already in action. At this level of analysis, I found myself developing a sense of the overall structure of the interview, noticing the richer and detailed sections, as well as any contradictions and paradoxes.

The next stage was the most detailed level of analysis, for which I spent at least a week per interview. It was important at this stage to focus on staying close to the transcript. As per the guidelines, I used three types of exploratory commentary at this level of analysis. I used a different coloured font for each level of analysis, in order to differentiate descriptive (red), linguistic (green), and conceptual coding (blue) from one another.

At the descriptive coding level I focused on simply describing – even paraphrasing - the content. The linguistic level of analysis went deeper and allowed for a degree of interpretation. I focused on the specific use of words, metaphors, phrases, terms, and movement between tenses. This level of examination also included consideration of non-verbal accounts of the experience such as stutters,

repetitions, emphases, silences, laughter, and sighs. I examined the semantic content and the language used by the participant while trying to get a sense of how they talked about or understood their experience, paying attention to the way they described and made sense of it. The final stage of conceptual and interrogative coding also allowed for further interpretative engagement with the data through a questioning of underlying meanings. I attempted to strike a balance between challenging the data and not straying too far from it. Aware of the double hermeneutic at work, I attempted to manage this balance by remembering that 'what is important is that the interpretation was inspired by, and rose from, attending to the participant's word, rather than being imported from outside' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 9).

From here onwards I made an analytic shift to look for emergent themes, viewing them as 'phrases which speak to the essence of the piece and contain enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 92). At this stage I worked primarily with my notes rather than the transcript although I often checked back with the transcript to ensure I remained grounded in the data. It felt crucial to reflect on my role as the researcher at this stage since there was a move to a more interpretive stance and the hermeneutic circle was in action as I moved from analyzing parts of the data to considering it as a whole. This highlighted, for me, the way that analysis is a synergistic process of the participant's interpretation combined with the manner in which I understood and interpreted it as researcher.

Once I had completed the process of drawing out emergent themes, I listed them chronologically and printed them out. I found that I often started with upwards of 100 emergent themes but this was due to a repetition of themes worded differently. For each interview, I was able to reduce the number of emergent themes to less than 40. I then cut them out and moved them around manually, looking for connections across emergent themes. I found it useful to abstract and cluster the themes on a large pin board or using post-it notes on the floor so that I had a graphic representation of the emerging structure which then gave me a sense of the gestalt of that particular transcript. It was indeed true that some themes 'act as magnets, pulling the other themes towards them' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p.96). Of course there were emergent themes which stood alone, or which were represented by one or two participants. These themes were not discarded on this basis, but rather whether the theme helped the participant to make sense of their experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). I recorded in my reflexive journal, decisions and choices I made about clustering and collapsing themes and/or keeping/discarding themes. Once clusters were formed I gave them each a descriptive super-ordinate theme label that conveyed the conceptual nature of the themes within them.

This stage of the analysis was challenging as I often worried that I was moving away from the participant's experience, but I found reassurance in the guidelines, which states that this is indeed a part of the process, and that analysis is a 'product of both [researcher and participant's] collaborative efforts' (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, pg. 92). I found this part of the analysis to be an iterative process

where I continually checked against the transcript to ensure solid connections between quotes and clusters/themes, and continually abstracted (clustered similar themes) and revised theme titles, even after moving on to new transcripts.

Once this was complete, I ensured that I stayed close to the data by drawing up a summary table (Appendix 8) with columns which detailed each super-ordinate theme with emergent themes within it, the page number and line for a particular quote associated with the theme, and the quote. I felt that if each column was represented in the others, that this was an indication that I was staying close to the data. I followed the steps set out by Smith (2011) and attempted to immerse myself in the data, engaging and grappling with the transcripts, allowing the process to be flexible and organic, and allowing theme names to be continually revised.

The next stage involved moving on to repeat the same process for the next transcript, treating it individually and in its own right, taking care to be open to the new and to bracket ideas emerging from analysis of the previous transcript(s). Although it was impossible not to be influenced by the previous case(s) at all, I attempted to adopt the phenomenological attitude to hold in abeyance previous themes in order that I might find new themes, and also recognize revisions needed to be made to the previous ones. This, again, was a highly iterative process.

Once all transcripts were analyzed individually I began analysis across transcripts, comparing and contrasting clusters across participants and looking for convergences and divergences in the data. This sometimes involved reconfiguring and relabeling clusters or emergent themes into new superordinate themes. This



stage helped to move the analysis to an even more abstracted, synthesized and theoretical level as I was able to see higher order concepts shared across cases. In the final stage, some cluster themes were clustered together to form master themes which could begin to capture the data as a whole and go some way to answering the research question. This process too was iterative.

I found it helpful to construct a master table of themes (Appendix 9) from the cross analysis, which details each master theme, the sub themes within it, and the emergent themes within those sub-themes. It also illustrates the number of times each emergent theme occurs for each participant, and calculates the overall prevalence of each super-ordinate theme. This gave me an overall picture of the findings, both in terms of the particular and the whole, and was extremely helpful for the write-up of results.

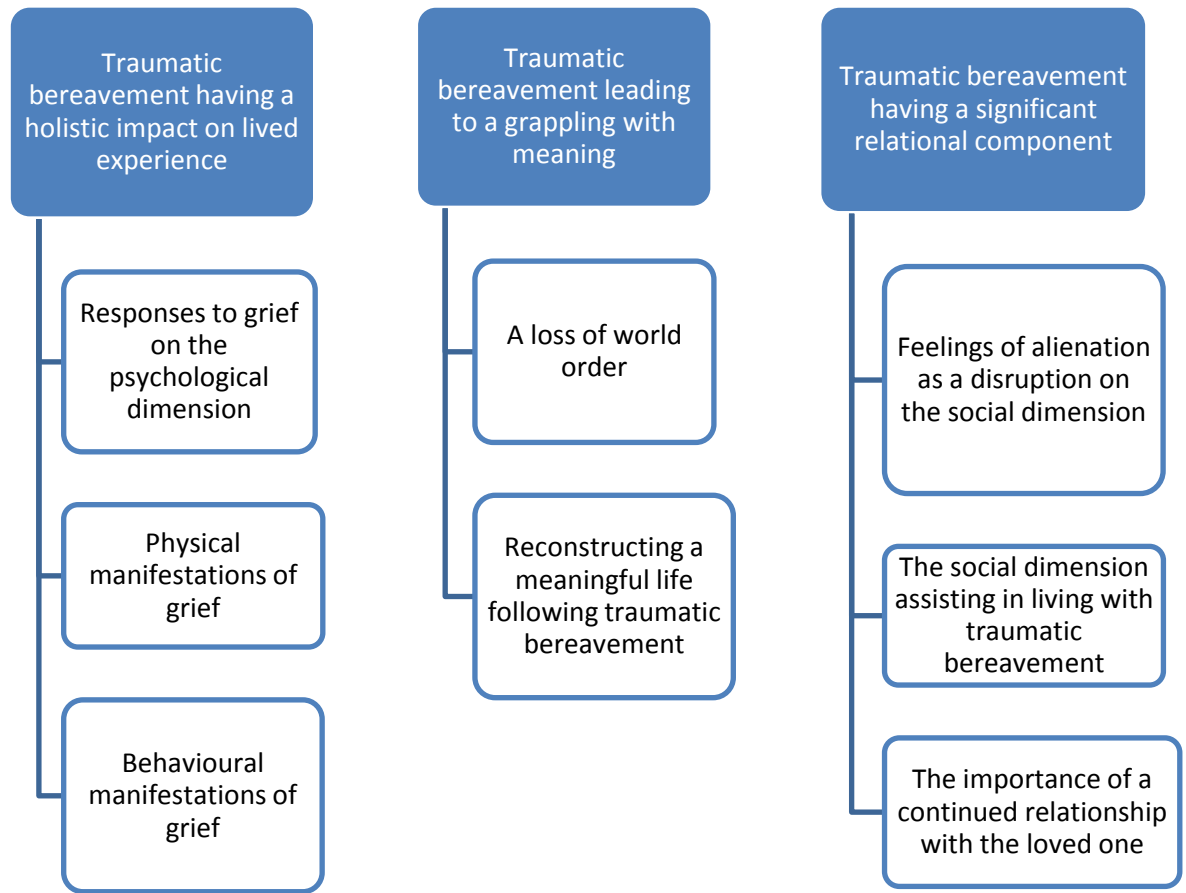
Overall, I found that the data was continually sifted and pared down by this iterative and flexible process of analysis which developed organically and indeed extended itself into the write-up phase of the research.

# Results

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## 22 Introduction

The analysis of data brought up 3 master themes each having sub-themes within them, as illustrated in the diagram below. Master themes and sub-themes were common across all participants:



**Figure 1: Master themes and sub-themes**

This chapter aims to provide a full, coherent, narrative account of the experience of living through traumatic bereavement that is ‘comprehensible, systematic, and persuasive’ (Smith et al., 2009, pg. 109). It is a commentary of my analytic interpretations which I will evidence with extracts from interview transcripts. While there may be many possible examples to evidence a theme, only one extract will generally be taken from each relevant participant to evidence each theme discussed. Exceptions are made in instances where it is necessary to evidence a theme with more than one extract per participant. This is done in the interest of

space and readability, but it is also worth noting that themes were not selected based purely on prevalence, but rather their ability to give meaningful insight into the experience of living with traumatic bereavement. Nonetheless, for details on the number of times each theme occurs per participant please see Appendix 9. Finally, analysis brought up a holistic view of traumatic bereavement wherein aspects of the experience proved to be intimately interconnected. It is important to note that clear lines therefore cannot be drawn between themes making overlap inevitable.

I will begin this section by giving an in-depth look at the participants' descriptions of the first master theme; traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience. Within this master theme I will cover its sub-themes which include a significant psychological response to loss, physical manifestations of grief, and behavioural manifestations of grief. I will then turn to participants' descriptions of the second master theme; traumatic bereavement leading to a grappling with meaning. Within this section, participant descriptions of the sub-themes including a loss of world order and re-constructing a meaningful life will be covered. Finally, I will move on to the third and final master theme; the experience of traumatic bereavement as having a significant relational component, within which the social domain and the importance of a continued relationship with the loved one will be covered. In addition to this thematic presentation, I will also interweave idiographic perspectives of participants' experience.

## **23 Master theme I: Traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience**

The term 'grief' is used here to denote the response or reaction to traumatic bereavement. Within this master theme, that reaction encompasses grief

manifestations on the psychological, physical, and behavioural spectrum, as illustrated.

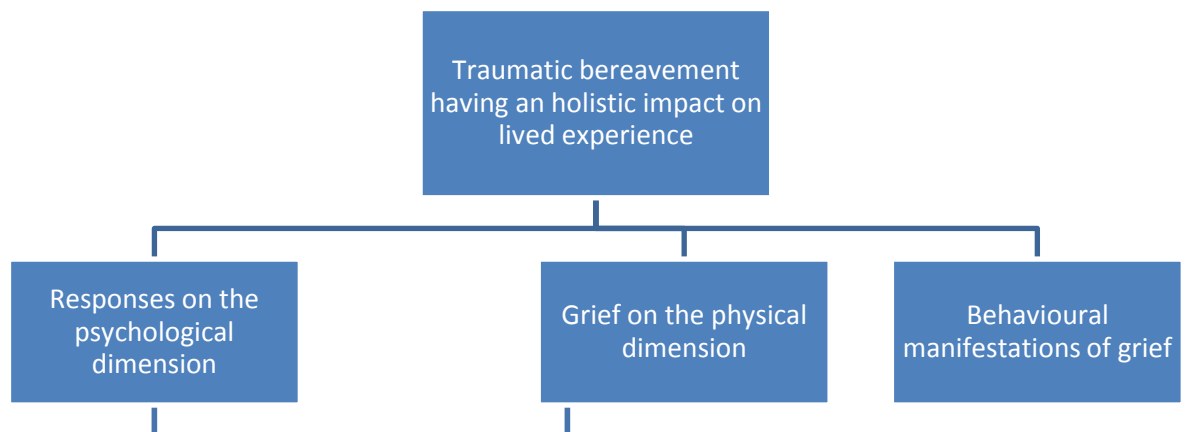


Figure 2: Master theme I

### **23.1 Sub-theme 1: Responses to grief on the psychological dimension**

All participants described experiencing feelings of shock following traumatic bereavement. The shock response described had emotional, cognitive, and

perceptual components with differing combinations and emphasis across participants.

At the emotional level, shock in the initial moments of finding out about the loss was generally described as a feeling of emotional numbness and a sense that the full grief response was being held off:

**Yvonne:**

‘Erm, and I can’t, I mean I suppose I had a numbness but I can’t remember, I mean I honestly cannot remember, erm... got an image of being in the car and being handed a letter.’

**Kay:**

‘...when you’re in shock... it numbs you almost... the whole thing at once I don’t think you could survive it.’

**Ben:**

‘You know... erm... but very aware of the holding back... of whatever my experience was going to be...’

**Zoe:**

‘... and if I felt stressed I’d always smoke but... I didn’t smoke anything for five days. I forgot that I was a smoker. I was in that much shock.’

**Sally:**



'The actual mourning doesn't start until a little bit later. I think that initial period is just such a lot of shock, the brain can't take it all in straight away or it protects you.'

This sense of an impending response is powerfully illustrated by the metaphorical use of emotional pain as a wave:

**Kay:**

'Like you feel like you're gonna be... you know like a.... the image that comes to mind is like a Tsunami [...] You know... you know like when the wave pulls back [...] You know the sea pulls back and then you... you feel as though you're being pulled back and, you know, that at some point it's just gonna go... over your head. That's how, that's how... yeah a really powerful feeling of erm, knowing it's gonna come but it's not there yet...'

**Ben:**

'It's that... I didn't want to... let the, the tidal wave over me until I was somewhere, where...well not there!'

**Sally:**

'Yeah... literally unbelievable. And, just sitting outside the house, I just was... I mean I really was just stunned [...] Erm, there were several moments where it

swept, you're sort of, like this wave of... oh my god! This has happened and it comes from right in there...'

Sally described a movement between shock and realisation in the initial moments of bereavement which is further elaborated in the extract below:

**Sally:**

'There'd be periods of complete, you know, grief... And then, lots of shock, erm... where you can almost act trance like... normally you know.'

Converse to this sense of delay which was characteristic of many of the participants' experience of shock, participants also described the moments of hearing about the death as shocking yet eliciting an immediate and intense emotional response:

**Laura:**

'I remember I was just... I just slid down the wall. I just, absolutely... I just couldn't stand. I just slid down the wall. And I was just absolutely... inconsolable. Just shaking and, shocked, and just...'

**Zoe:**

'Apparently I fell on the floor. Apparently I just screamed and dropped to the floor.'

These convergences in the data begin to give some insight into the way that shock may be experienced as numbness and a sense of an impending emotional response, being immediately overcome by the realisation of the loss, and movement between the two.

The cognitive disruption resulting from the initial shock was described in a number of ways. Some participants experienced

- 1) An inability to think straight or absorb the reality of the loss:

**Yvonne:**

‘...it’s the same really in any situation but when you’re, or in fact I was abroad and heard this, it didn’t feel real.’

**Lucky:**

‘...So at this point he was still kind of moving around and I didn’t think... I was still kind of shocked and... and I called out to the neighbours...’

**Kay:**

‘...we just sat really quietly thinking, what... what do we do... it... I felt... confused... really confused...’

‘...proper disbelief... REAL disbelief that... not just... not just saying the words like you say ‘Oh I can’t believe it’... like you REALLY couldn’t believe it’

**Laura:**

‘...there’s the shock and the fact that you can’t really reconcile it with the child that you know...’

**Sally:**

‘I wasn’t, you know... one of those people that’s calm in a crisis. Not, not with that. It was just... sheer... panic.’

‘Complete panic... and then just... complete disbelief I mean it’s that... I can’t take it in! It’s so... unreal.’

b) A loss of memory in the initial moments of hearing about the death:

**Ben:**

‘... she said ‘No, erm, he’s gone’... and... and... I can’t remember what happened after that on the call.’

**Zoe:**

‘Apparently I fell on the floor. Apparently I just screamed and dropped to the floor.’

c) Disjointed memory around the time of the loss, where some moments are remembered in great detail and other moments are a ‘blur’:

**Yvonne:**

'My, my memory... It's the first time I've ever experienced in my life that I, I, erm... my memory has really played funny tricks on me looking back on that time'

**Ben:**

'Yeah some of it's a blur, some of it's really clear. It's, it's kind of one or the other'

In addition to these emotional and cognitive characteristics of shock, some participants described shock at the perceptual or embodied level. In some cases, participants described the state of shock as feeling somehow separated from the immediate physical environment and/or a sense of being outside of his/her body:

**Lucky:**

'... because I've heard of trauma before... I was removed from what was going on a bit'

**Kay:**

'...it was almost like a sort of haze like everything was in a haze and slow motion almost.'

'... I was watching from elsewhere, from above'

**Ben:**

'Life seemed to be erm, like a TV show that I was in and I wasn't.... It wasn't really computing erm, I felt very estranged from my experience and almost erm, yeah catching up.'

**Laura:**

'... it was almost like a film. It was almost like I really felt like I was watching myself in this film'

Furthermore, although the initial shock was perhaps most pronounced in the data, there was evidence that a degree of shock pervades the experience of traumatic bereavement. Lucky, Kay, and Sally describe this on-going sense of shock:

**Lucky:**

'...I still ring up my mom and ask her to reconfirm that things like that happened at that time... Yeah there's a lot of it that feels unreal...'

**Kay:**

'... you'd wake up in the morning and your heart would just, and, and, you'd realise again with the shock every morning, that [son's] not here, [son's] gone. And you, it's almost like it was fresh every morning for months and months. Probably a year that feeling...'

**Sally:**

‘... it's... it's slightly strange to relay the story because in some ways it still feels like it...it was a film! [laughs]. It's almost still not real!’

Within the psychological dimension of traumatic bereavement, participants also described diverse emotional responses to traumatic bereavement. Descriptions encompassed a range of emotion from the positive to the negative, the need to confront the pain of grief, and the need to turn away from the painful feelings of grief.

The turning away from grief usually occurred during the initial stages of bereavement and unlike the numbing associated with shock, was described as a more purposeful shift (even if not entirely reflected upon) from the experience. It was also generally understood as helpful in preventing the bereaved individual to not become overwhelmed by their circumstances.

From the 7 bereaved individuals who participated in the study, 5 described turning away from the pain of grief:

**Yvonne:**

‘Erm, but it was almost a bit like in some ways it was put on pause because erm, I think because I had, I felt like I had to keep myself together. I had to keep, survive.’

**Lucky:**

<p>'Cos if I didn't contain it, it was gonna stop me from... doing... from having a life. From having MY life.'</p>
<p><b>Kay:</b></p> <p>'...and then, and then we had two weeks to arrange a funeral so erm, I don't remember that two weeks being tough at all, only that there was so much to do, but it wasn't...[...] Yeah... I went into like a different zone... of, erm, it had to be right for him, so, erm, it was so important that it was perfect for him.'</p>
<p><b>Ben:</b></p> <p>'...this is speculation in a way but I, I suspect I can't remember because I wasn't allowing myself, you know, to absorb information... '</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>'I don't know I think I was just trying to numb myself really once I started to feel. And I wouldn't let myself, I wouldn't... let it in properly, the pain.'</p>

Although this turning away occurred mostly during the initial stages of grief, it was also evident as an on-going part of the experience of traumatic bereavement for some participants.

Yvonne described putting her grief 'on pause' during the first year after loss. However, this turning away is also evident in descriptions beyond the first year and was seemingly on-going at the time of the interview:



**Yvonne:**

‘...there was a lot of drinking, and erm, it was lot less healthy for me. And I was, I was in a bit of a mess, and I would quite often get very angry. And get very drunk. And, erm, kind of, not reckless but sometimes find myself very drunk in situations, you know kind of having got myself lost from other people and fortunately nothing ever happened, erm... but looking back on it now, erm... it was like I put a pause on all of the stuff when... I just, I took care of myself when I was in [country] because it would have been too dangerous to do any of that on my own...’

‘...Erm, but... I didn’t really know any of the details until erm, even just I think it must have been about two years ago I, I could have done it a long time before but I got a copy of the coroner’s report and erm, since I got it I’ve read it but I’ve never really poured over it. It’s quite funny that it was almost a process of getting it which was more important than the detail of what’s in it...’

‘... Erm, yeah... so yeah I, I’ve in, I’ve lots of questions about why and when and I could have asked those questions but somehow I, I... I wanted to but I didn’t want to.’

Ben also described a turning away from the feelings of grief that extended beyond the initial impact of hearing about the loss. It was also understood as a pre-existing

tendency which was exaggerated through the experience of traumatic bereavement:

**Ben:**

‘... yeah the circumstances of his death and the fact of his death exaggerated tendencies that were already within me.’

This turning away which may initially have been helpful extended into the years after traumatic bereavement and eventually became problematic:

**Ben:**

‘So... and what I used to do is I used to bolt down that road, you know I used to go down there very, very quickly and before you knew it I was extremely far away from my experience and I wouldn’t deal with that probably for a few months until there was a bout of depression or something similar.’

Participant 6 described a turning away from the painful feelings of grief for up to 2 years after being traumatically bereaved:

**Zoe:**

‘...I was still on these tablets and... I was really like, popular for some reason. I was off me head on these pills and I was drinking and smoking whacky bacci and erm, I think I was quite good fun to be around at times you know.’

Conversely, participants also described a need to be true to their feelings and to confront the pain of grief:

**Kay:**

‘I wanted to be true... I even wanted to, like, grieve properly. I didn't want to mask anything or, I just wanted to go through the eye of the storm, almost...’

**Laura:**

“I want to feel and be responsible for what I'm feeling, and not looking for something else to take this away from me. It's like ‘take it away from me, take me away’. I want to feel.”

**Sally:**

‘My... was I trying to... sort of... let me think this through it's... hard to describe this. Erm.... [pause]... almost not... not allowing myself... the... an ability to hang... the chance to hang on... to him. But deal with it being, a finality, and I was going to have to deal with that.’

It is important to note that participants did not describe experiencing one or the other, but generally expressed needing to turn away from the pain of grief during some times, and needing to confront it at others. The two were not mutually exclusive in moving through the experience of traumatic bereavement.

A wide range of emotions were described in the experience of living through traumatic bereavement. Feelings of guilt, responsibility, regret, and anger were most prevalent across participants. Although they were not always highly prevalent within each narrative, they are considered important because they are emotions which when felt can be intense, pervasive, and difficult to work through.

Engagement with questions around guilt and responsibility were expressed by 6 of the 7 participants:

<b>Yvonne:</b>  ‘...he wasn’t gonna tell us and there wasn’t anything we could do on the one hand but on the other hand, could there have been?’
<b>Lucky:</b>  ‘I could have... I could have called her that night I could have said she could come over... you know I could have done lots of things...’
<b>Kay:</b>  ‘... to lose a child to suicide... I think you feel guilty more than you can put into words because you've failed. You've failed your job as a parent... you've ultimately failed...’
<b>Ben:</b>  ‘ ...he sacrificed himself hugely in providing for us... and I, I think that was partly responsible for his death’
<b>Zoe:</b>  ‘And cos I was his older sister I felt like I should have done more...’

**Sally:**

'It seemed like it was again a bit of a flick of the switch, I, I ... maybe I wasn't recognising that it was coming on gradually...'

Feelings of regret were considered as distinct from those of guilt in this analysis. Rather than being about responsibility for the death or believing that it could have been stopped, regret pertains to feelings of wishing that something had been different in the run up to the death of the loved one, usually the nature of the relationship between the bereaved and deceased. Feelings of regret were described by 5 of the 7 participants:

**Yvonne:**

"I remember having a conversation with him and I was very dismissive and I was very kind of, was kind of perhaps you would be, or as I was, at 25, 'well you know, she had a good...' you know classic nonsense that people say which I would never say to anybody now."

**Lucky:**

'You know I didn't get to experience all of it, as I would have liked to. In hindsight you know, I wish I knew her better.'

**Kay:**

'I REALLY wish I could've shown him the phone records to prove to him that I hadn't phoned her, she'd phoned me.'

**Ben:**

‘...deciding to be that kind of father... ...and very much present, was part of what didn’t allow himself the nourishment which may have allowed him to live a bit longer’

**Laura:**

‘...we were going to go to, we were gonna take her to the theatre but it didn’t quite work out, it was... and it was, tsk, just, it was just... so awful’

Feelings of anger were felt by 6 of the 7 participants in a variety of ways. It was often experienced as anger towards others, but in some instances anger was directed at self, the deceased, and/or the situation.

**Yvonne:**

‘...I still feel some anger which was reflected in my journal about erm, how little support I appeared to get from my work at the time.’

**Lucky:**

‘...it was Easter the week before and my cousin's girlfriend had a lunch and she didn’t invite my aunt and I was so angry with her then. I was even more angry with her after and I’m even more angry with her now!’

**Kay:**

‘I used to look at myself in the mirror and not like what I saw anymore. You know I was... cross... I think maybe my anger was turned [...] To myself... Cos I

<p>couldn't be angry with [son] so I had to be angry with somebody. So I was angry with myself...'</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>'[teary] It was...despicable... It was like he wasn't talking about a person! It was like he wasn't talking to another person. Erm, and he wasn't talking about a death, and he wasn't talking about a death in awful circumstances, with no warning...'</p>
<p><b>Sally:</b></p> <p>'... yeah... still feeling really angry. Felt very angry he'd abandoned me. Really angry that my life had changed so much...'</p>

### 23.1.1 Summary of sub-theme 1:

There was a significant impact on the psychological world of all participants. Initially, feelings of shock characterized the experience of traumatic bereavement although shock could be seen to extend beyond the initial period and appeared to pervade the experience of traumatic bereavement. The feelings of shock resulting from traumatic bereavement had a significant impact on the lived experience of the participants. This was generally experienced on the emotional level as a numbing or suspension of what was expected of a full grief response and was understood as a protective mechanism by some participants. Simultaneously, participants

experienced a cognitive arrest in which they were unable to comprehend what had happened and found it difficult to think clearly. There was thus an overall sense of stopping short of a full appreciation of the loss both at the cognitive and emotional levels. Some participants described complete memory loss in the initial moments of shock and disjointed memory thereafter. Shock was sometimes accompanied by a disruption at the perceptual or embodied level, where participants described feeling physically disconnected from the situation in which they found themselves. Rather than being a fixed experience, shock was described as a movement between numbness and a sense of the full grief response being held off, an intense emotional response, and an altered lived experience on the cognitive and perceptual levels.

Turning away from the pain of grief was also a strong aspect of this sub-theme. It was most often described in the initial stages of grief, but in the case of some participants it carried on for longer and constituted a larger component of the experience of traumatic bereavement. Converse to this turning away, participants expressed a need to confront their feelings and move 'through' them. There was a significant emotional response in which participants most notably described experiencing feelings of guilt/responsibility, regret, and anger. Of course, feelings of deep sadness and love underlined all of the narratives, pointing to the richness and diversity of the participants' emotional worlds. Finally, the need to turn away from grief and the need to confront grief were not mutually exclusive. Each appeared to be an important aspect of the lived experience of traumatic bereavement. Overall, there was movement between feelings of shock, turning



away from feelings, and confronting the pain of grief, rather than a linear process in any particular direction.

## 23.2 Sub-theme 2: Physical manifestations of grief

All participants described experiencing physical manifestations of grief. These manifestations were experienced both in the initial moments of loss but were also seen to have pervasive and long lasting effects on the lived experience of traumatic bereavement:

**Yvonne:**

‘... photographs of us sitting there and that was the time in the week that I was back from [country] so we all look knackered and I look particularly sort of pale.’

**Lucky:**

‘I remember at the beginning it felt... ah... describing it in therapy and it is was... it was in here... [pointing to chest and stomach]’

**Kay:**

‘I remember one day I was... just cried so much that, that the ... the... it came with... it comes from your stomach you know, I didn’t... I didn’t know whether to stand up, sit down... I, I was... I was just completely, it was almost like being in labour where you just follow your body. You, when you’re in labour you can’t, you have to... your instincts take over so you, you know, like you squat or...’

**Ben:**

It's flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like I would have had erm... physically I would have aches, I would have slept badly, I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin.

**Laura:**

'I just felt weak. Just weak. I just couldn't hold myself up.'

**Zoe:**

'Yeah, just, just I felt it in here [pointing to stomach]... '

**Sally:**

'...you're sort of, like this wave of... oh my god! This has happened and it comes from right in there... [pointing to stomach] and it just comes...'

Such manifestations were particularly strong for Kay, who was exposed to the violence of her traumatic loss and who sought professional assistance to deal with anxiety, panic attacks, and flashbacks:

**Kay:**

'But later on, [images of washing bloodied sweatshirt] caused me a lot of anxiety... like the memories... the flashbacks of doing that...'

'... because you feel as though someone's squeezing on that pipe, you know, so you can't get breathe enough. So I felt like, erm, I was breathing through a straw. So if you, so, if you had to breathe through a straw and you couldn't get enough air at once, so you...so I'd feel as though I'd be [demonstrates], and every now and then I'd go [gasp], that's, that's how it felt.'

'I would get really, really anxious.... my heart would pound... I could feel my heart beat in my neck like 'ah ah ah'... it was terrible'

'You know I knew, it was so painful I, it was so... some days were so painful that I can't even describe how it felt... it was physical and emotional, like being tortured'

### 23.2.1 Summary of sub-theme 2:

The physical symptoms of grief were seen to manifest in various ways, to varying extents and at different times following traumatic bereavement. It was often described as a pain which could be located and which often originated from the stomach area. It was physical both in terms of such pain and having physical effects on the individual such as their appearance. The physicality of grief was experienced in the form of severe anxiety, panic attacks, and flashbacks by one participant whose experience of traumatic bereavement was characterised by violence, some of which she was exposed to. Importantly, all participants

experienced some physicality of grief, suggesting that it was an important aspect of the lived experience of traumatic bereavement.

### 23.3 Sub-theme 3: Behavioural manifestations of grief

This sub-theme will illustrate behaviours that can be observed in the experience of traumatic bereavement. There was some overlap between this sub-theme and behaviours associated with traumatic bereavement on the social dimension. This sub-theme, however, pertains solely to behaviours which did not directly involve other individuals. Behaviours that involved relating (or not relating) to others, including seeking a continued relationship with the lost one, are discussed within the master theme 'Grief as having a significant relational component'.

Participants reported behavioural manifestations of grief such as crying/inability to cry, reduced functionality, diminished self-care, and self-destructive behaviours such as drinking and over-spending:

**Yvonne:**

'...there was a lot of going out, there was a lot of drinking, and erm, it was a lot less healthy for me.'

**Lucky:**

'And I used to run up to the beach every day and just sit... on a log... on the beach and cry!'

**Kay:**

'I don't think I went food shopping for 6 months. I don't think I cooked a dinner for 6 months.'

**Ben:**

'Erm, but my, you know that... that wasn't.... I didn't cry much'

**Laura:**

'I would want to listen to quite melancholic teenagey sort of emo music [...] I quite like rock music anyway but I would, I would... there were a few albums that we had that were really quite emo-ey music. Not really what [laughter], you would expect or what I'd normally listen to.'

**Zoe:**

'And I just used to put me coat on and a bit of lipstick on... I looked like I had a leisure suit on but it wasn't it was pyjamas'

'I just felt this compulsion that I've been robbed and I need to take something back... and I had this shopping habit that got so out of control.'

They also described difficulties engaging in particular actions which were direct reminders of the loss:

**Lucky:**

‘... she didn’t have a choice about it. You know... her human dignity and choice was stripped away and it felt wrong to enjoy [sex]... for a while’

‘And I had a problem opening front doors. I really... I was really scared to go.... to get home on my own. To go home alone and open a front door. That actual physical opening the front for... was quite scary...’

**Laura:**

‘...for quite a long time I would come into the house and, definitely for the first year I would definitely come into our house and there’s a ... there’s like a couple of places with quite high ceilings and I would be almost expecting to come in and see my son hanging.’

Participants described being overcome by a grief which was experienced at a visceral level, pointing to the experience of grief being all-consuming:

**Kay:**

‘...you, you do whatever your body tells you to do to give birth, cos you, you just go with your instinct and that's how the grief was, it was almost... there were times when it was animalistic almost. I, I , I, I was ... just taken over by it.’

**Ben:**

'It's flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like... I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin.'

**Zoe:**

'It was erm, it was something... prim... prime... is it primeval? It was like an urge, that you can't control, like... breathing [...] but on a soul level, on a soul level'

**Sally:**

'Oh! My God! This has happened! He's dead! And just... and and... that... kind of real guttural... 'aarggh' screaming, you know, a noise I've never heard myself make... you know'

These feelings of being at the mercy of grief led participants to behaviours which made them question their own choices and actions:

**Kay:**

'... I wanted to wash his sweatshirt... I don't know why, it was almost like I was mental. Like, like I had some kind of obsessional thing. There was, I couldn't stop myself, I knew it was gonna be horrific...'

‘... and it's almost like, erm, like you've got this compulsion to do strange things, and that carried on.... there were other things that I'd have to do that erm, almost like, you question your sanity you know...’

**Zoe:**

‘Cos I felt like I'd been robbed and that somebody had... you know, I had had this massive loss and yeah... I stole, I actually spoke to the doctor about it cos I felt terrible afterwards’

### 23.4 Summary of sub-theme 3:

The behavioural manifestations of grief ranged from the more typical responses such as crying to more idiosyncratic expressions of grief. Participants described doing things which they would ordinarily not do but which they felt compelled to do. There was a powerful sense of grief being all-encompassing, seeping deep into every aspect of the self, leading to a sense of being out of control and behaving in unusual ways.

## 24 Master Theme II: Traumatic bereavement leading to a grappling with meaning

Meaning making appeared to be a crucial aspect of the experience of living with traumatic bereavement. The process of meaning making took many forms and is



apparent within other master themes, but the most salient aspects of meaning making are covered in this section.

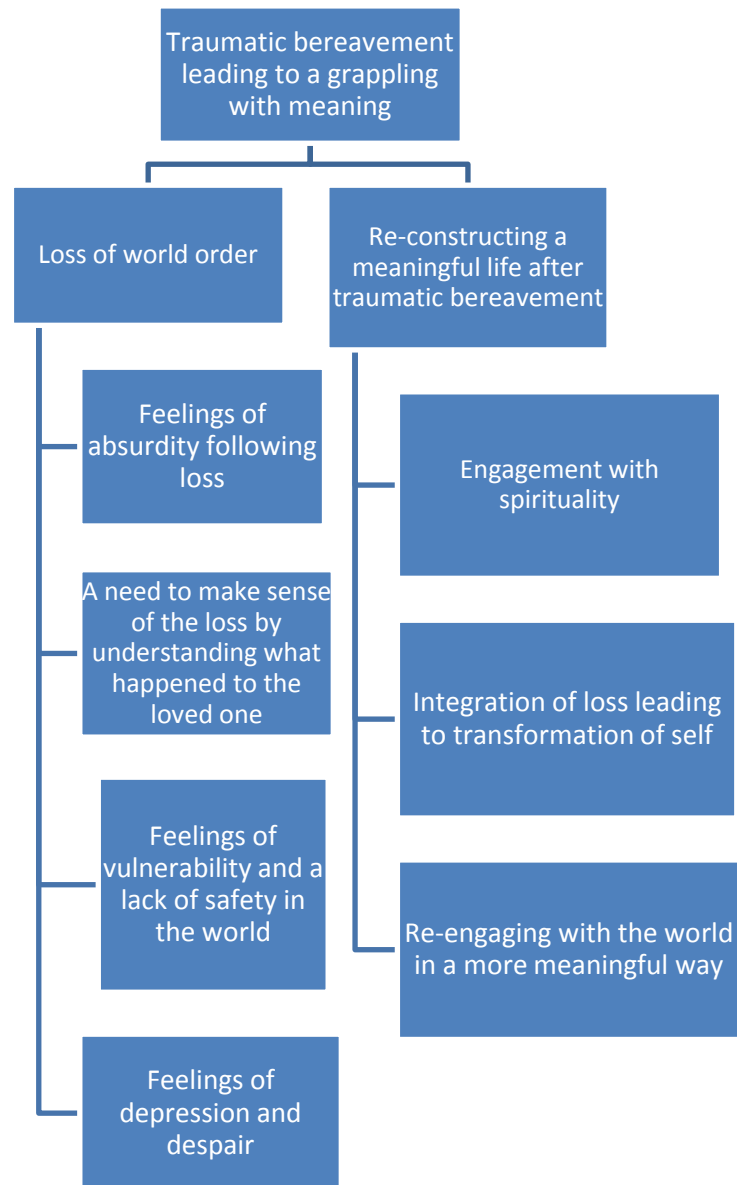


Figure 3: Master theme II

All participants grappled with meaning following traumatic bereavement. This master theme encompasses the journey that participants made in terms of

experiencing an initial loss of world order and re-constructing a meaningful life following traumatic bereavement. The most prominent areas in which participants searched for meaning were engaging with spirituality, integrating the experience into their narratives and experiencing a transformed self, and re-engaging with life in a more reflected upon and meaningful way.

### 24.1 Sub-theme 1: A loss of world order

Participants described a loss of world order following traumatic bereavement, meaning that assumptions and beliefs that they held about the safety and predictability of the world were shattered in the face of sudden and unexpected loss. A loss of world order was evident in the sense of absurdity which participants described following traumatic bereavement. They described a sense of the loss being random, illogical and not making sense.

**Lucky:**

‘...she had a huuuge presence, in... the community as well. You know and... and there she was in her own home she was... killed in the most unceremonious way...’

**Kay:**

‘... just before he died, he had, he seemed to work everything out.’

**Ben:**

'Erm, so it... he jogged... and he'd been very happy the few days before and... certainly as mom would describe it [slight laughter].'

**Laura:**

'She was bright, she was bubbly, she was with friends, she was just... it was nowhere on the scene. And that is what was shocking...'

**Sally:**

'It was like a ridiculous tragedy... you know... horrific scene in a film. It was like it couldn't possibly be real. You know it was just...'

Following a loss of world order, participants responded by attempting to make sense of the loss. For some participants this was done by trying to understand the details and the facts around what had happened to their loved one.

**Lucky:**

'No a lot of it doesn't make sense... Still, still to date... you know... because, because... the other part that doesn't make a lot of sense is that the neighbour on the other side...'

**Kay:**

'They were arguing in the car at her house, by her house. He told her what he was gonna do. He said 'I'm gonna wrap my car round a tree'. She got ... they were rowing, she was angry with him, she, she, tried... she erm, tried to get, release the seatbelt to cuddle him and he pushed her away and pushed the seatbelt back in so at that point the seatbelt was still on and she said she was cross with him for saying it and she said 'don't be ridiculous' and bla bla, erm, and he said 'No I know... I know where I'm gonna do it. I've got the perfect place so he'd obviously thought...'

**Ben:**

'...the doctor had said he, he hit his head... and he had a cut, but it hadn't bled. Which, I don't know the doctor said that means he was, his heart had stopped, which makes some sense. Erm, so I suspect he didn't know a great deal about it, erm...'

Making sense of the experience by understanding what had happened was particularly important for Lucky, who was bereaved by homicide and had no definite answers around the circumstances of the death. In her case, the experience of traumatic bereavement was characterised in large part by uncertainty and an on-going processing of the possible explanations, indicating an importance of such understanding in moving through traumatic bereavement:

**Lucky:**

'HUUGE amount of uncertainty... erm, so there were five men, who were arguably involved [...] They came in, they held her, they raped her, they erm, and they killed her. So... I can't really remember how far it went with the autopsy to see she, she died of a ...what's the lesion... she was hit with a blunt object onto the head. And, and I think maybe it was a combination of the two...'

'But... so if I we're to believe the story of the five men being involved, you know what I didn't want to believe that they...'

'And then the other guy went missing and till today we still don't know if he is alive or not. We don't know.'

'I do remember what I found consoling was reliving the experience. Reliving my experience [...] and keeping.... to keep trying to make sense of it'

For participants who had been bereaved by suicide, an importance around the need to make sense of the loved one's choice to die was also evident in the data:

**Yvonne:**

'...but he was depressed, so... erm. But he was, he was depressed from when he was a little boy cos I've read some of his diaries since, and so you know I, I know that now, as well, so it, it wasn't just about being divorced...'

**Kay:**

'I think potentially he...that was an option for him, I think suicide was always, erm, an option for him right from when he was young. I don't know why... maybe I'll figure it out one day, but erm...'

**Laura:**

'I wanted to, feel, I think... I wanted to feel within that space [...] [deceased's] space. I actually really wanted to feel that space.'

**Sally:**

'Although obviously I also appreciate he was incredibly mentally ill. So it's like the heart and the mind, you know... separation of knowing the reality or the... intellectually what the deal was...'

Loss of world order was also evident in participants' feelings of vulnerability, lack of safety in the world, its unpredictability, and the fragility of life:

**Lucky:**

'...yeah it changed me... 'cause... I was more cautious about the world. To me the world was always a safe place before then...'

**Ben:**

'I meditate and, and last year I'd... I'd done a few things that led me to meditate a bit more on death and impermanence and fragility and yeah... dad comes up in that...'

**Laura:**

'This is a possibility now, and the safety of 'it's not gonna happen' had gone. That had been ripped away and it does happen. It happens to me, it happens to people who are really immediately close to me and it doesn't, it... nobody is spared'

**Sally:**

'I know sudden awful things can happen to you.'

Not feeling safe, which resulted from a loss of world order, was particularly pronounced for Lucky who was bereaved by homicide and had no definite answers around who was responsible for the death of her loved one.

**Lucky:**

'And now I always thought... at that point, to that point, that the world was a really safe place...'

'Yeah... you know that, that vulnerability is... you know you've, you've got one soul and one spirit and you're in charge of this body and...'

‘And I felt that... fear... I felt that, that vulnerability and then it really hit me... [noise disturbance outside].... look at my aunt... she's, she's in her own home, where she grew up... made me realise how vulnerable I've been’

‘And... once in a while bad things happen... and for a little while it made me think bad things happen all the time and the world is a really unsafe place...’

‘And then it makes me think as well about how I need to protect my daughter.’

The need for meaning, however, went beyond the need to make sense of the loss by understanding the details and circumstances surrounding it. Participants described a loss of existential meaning that extended further into the experience of being traumatically bereaved. This was illustrated through feelings of depression, despair and a loss of hope:

**Kay:**

‘I just couldn't see a way out of that black hole that I was in. It was, that time was, indescribably awful.’

**Ben:**

‘I'd become very isolated and... going through the motions of life. Erm, looking back to that period it just felt very grey’

**Laura:**

‘Just, it's just... the world suddenly seemed very empty, and meaningless...’

**Zoe:**



'I got into so much debt and I felt so numb... and I was just so, just felt like everything was so black and dark...'

### **24.1.1 Summary of sub-theme 1: A loss of world order**

All participants experienced a collapse of world order which was characterised by feelings of randomness and absurdity. Participants responded to this by attempting to make sense of their experience by understanding the facts surrounding the death and possible explanations in the cases of suicide. In the case of bereavement by homicide, having no clear knowledge of who the perpetrator was posed a significant and on-going challenge in moving through traumatic bereavement. Feelings of vulnerability and a lack of safety were also particularly pronounced in this instance, although all participants expressed a new appreciation of the fragility and unpredictability of life. Finally, participants also described feelings of despair and depression indicating that a loss of world order also led to a loss of a deeper sense of meaning in life.

### **24.2 Sub-theme 2: Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement**

The loss of world order resulting from traumatic bereavement called for a deeper search for meaning. They predominantly searched for meaning on the spiritual dimension, and meaning was made most commonly in terms of a transformation of self, and re-engaging with life in a more reflected upon, meaningful way.

In terms of an engagement with spirituality, participants described questions around spirituality and/or the existence of a God, with divergences in both manner and outcome of engagement.

**Yvonne:**

‘...and I’m not religious and I wrote quite a lot in my journals you know, you know, you don’t know maybe there is a God...’

**Lucky:**

‘And I really was struggling to let go of... what I had in [country], what I built in [country], what my life could have been in [country]... I saw... I went, I found a monastery close by... I did a lot of meditation and I just kept asking Buddha to show me my path.’

**Kay:**

‘Erm... so I used their library service and they used to send me books on the subject of suicide and erm, loss of a child, erm, whether there is a heaven or not.’

**Ben:**

‘... yeah I remember I didn’t believe in God at the time but I remember just saying ‘Please God... leave her alone’. I remember that, very, very clearly...’

**Laura:**

‘...a sense of some sort of super natural being that you could ask for some divine intervention in the worst possible moment. That has gone.’

**Zoe:**

‘...in a way yeah it’s been a massive loss there but I’ve also been given a huge gift because of my faith’

**Sally:**

‘... but once he died... I remember feeling quite adamant that there was no chance that he could be around spiritually. I sort of changed my mind at that moment.’

It is important to note that an engagement with spirituality was far broader than purely questions around the existence of a God. It was felt and expressed in a number of different ways such as through comfort in the outdoors, the need to take responsibility for one’s physical safety, feelings, choices around how to live, and having a renewed sense of purpose. Most participants found spiritual engagement to be beneficial:

**Yvonne:**

‘I would just walk all day, and at weekends sometimes I would do two long walks... again I suppose it was kind of spiritual or whatever, but there was something comforting about being outside...’

**Lucky:**

'As in spiritual as in you've got a soul and the world and it's so vulnerable and fragile, yes that had an impact on me. [...] Yeah... you know that, that vulnerability is... you know you've, you've got one soul and one spirit and you're in charge of this body...'

**Ben:**

'...Erm, and then we talked about my emotional life around my dad... the spirituality was also blocked off by that. The reason I say that with some confidence is, in my almost, rebuilding myself... in the last few, four five years, when I've accessed my spiritual.... my emotional life, my spiritual life has been there with it, so they kind of almost come as a pair.'

**Laura:**

'I think that that's where I see God for me, and spirituality is in the endurance, the capacity of individuals to, to find meaning in their life...'

**Zoe:**

'...there's no way I thought I would ever have any faith whatsoever or pass it on to a child if I had one. And for it to shape my whole reason and purpose for being here...'

In terms of a transformation of self, participants often initially described losing an aspect of self with the death of their loved one. This loss of self and/or self-esteem was in all cases experienced negatively:

<b>Yvonne:</b>  ‘...but I guess when someone chooses to go, erm, and chooses to end their lives themselves, it, it does... there’s a part of, of you, me, that wonders ‘well, I wasn’t enough.’
<b>Lucky:</b>  ‘It did rip my childhood away from me for a while.’
<b>Kay:</b>  ‘I just feel sorry for [daughter] and [son] because they kind of lost a little, they lost their mom in a way...’
<b>Ben:</b>  ‘... or maybe I’m emotionally a little bit, damaged? Or... different? Whatever word I want to give there but I... I’m not as I was when I was a child.’
<b>Zoe:</b>  ‘... when my brother died, it was just like the absolute worst thing that’s ever happened to me, and... it caused me to have a, a nervous breakdown’
<b>Sally:</b>  ‘I ... have always... been... had... elements of low self-esteem... and [deceased] would always be someone who, you know... boosted my self-esteem [...] And... I’ve had to do a lot of that for myself now’

This means that participants saw themselves as changed as a result of traumatic bereavement. Many described a process of having to integrate the loss into their narratives towards a new identity and understanding of self:

<b>Lucky:</b>  'Life is never gonna be the same after that experience. It was now a part of my fabric, it was about something that was gonna be part of me forever.'
<b>Kay:</b>  'I realise I'm this new person now.'
<b>Ben:</b>  'You know, bit of self-help, a bit of religion, a bit of philosophy and erm, changed my job and er... just a whole load of...'
<b>Laura:</b>  '...how I sort of get over it, if I ever get over it but a bit more integrated it, processed it, journeyed through it...'
<b>Zoe:</b>  'To cut a long story short, I know, that I now know, that I am, a medium...'

Through this process of integration, participants described experiencing transformative personal growth. The main areas of growth most notably arising from the data were

- 1) Greater and on-going self-understanding:

<p><b>Yvonne:</b></p> <p>‘Erm... changed me... I, I, a few years ago I probably, or ten years ago I probably would have said it hasn’t at all [...]Erm, but it, it, its erm, I, I think it’s had a, a huge kind of, seeping impact in terms of the choices I’ve made. The way that I am, erm... that I don’t think I realised any of that consciously whilst it was happening’</p>
<p><b>Kay:</b></p> <p>‘Yeah...and I feel, I feel like I know myself so well now...’</p>
<p><b>Ben:</b></p> <p>‘I’ve learnt that’s not the best thing for me, so... I’m trying... I try now with mixed success to not panic and not feed it.’</p>
<p><b>Laura:</b></p> <p>‘I didn’t even know how deeply that had gone into me that somewhere I would go, I would still have a sense of some sort of super natural being that you could ask for some divine intervention in the worst possible moment. That has gone.’</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>‘And so all of that has led me to realise who I am, why I am the way I am... and what I can do to help other people.’</p>
<p><b>Sally:</b></p> <p>‘I feel like I'm... know I’m a strong person. So that's good...’</p>

2) Growing more compassionate:

<p><b>Kay:</b></p> <p>‘Because I've suffered that anxiety so now I'm much more compassionate and understanding about other people.’</p>
<p><b>Ben:</b></p> <p>‘... and it's given me a huge appreciation of other people's difficulties and just what happens in life that...’</p>
<p><b>Laura:</b></p> <p>‘And so I'd always lit a candle every day. And, over the time that spot became the spot where I would light candles for dead people. So even if I heard somebody on the news that I didn't know, had died... and I was touched or moved [...] I would light a candle’</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>‘...you always try and treat people how you'd like to be treated yourself... Try not to judge other people’</p>

- 3) An appreciation of life and making deliberate choices around one's values and how to live:



**Ben:**

'I think spiritual anchor is quite a helpful term for me... yeah I don't get blown around so much now like even in emotional difficulties... like I do have some of those right now at the moment so I, as I said erm... I'd say I know who I am and I'm very definite in, yeah... what, what my priorities are and my sense of right and wrong and my sense of meaning in the world. Erm, that's all very clear to me and it's not clear as in I could write it all down but to the extent I don't know, I'm clear I don't know.'

**Zoe:**

'It's changed my whole outlook on life. It's changed my erm, purpose in life, it's changed everything...'

**Sally:**

'I think I feel... erm... tsk... like I've... want to make sure I don't let life pass me by? Erm... Not that I think I was doing that before, but... I definitely try and make a lot out of life now'

However, there were also elements of the transformed self and self-understanding which were not necessarily or readily experienced as positive growth:

**Yvonne:**

At 25 I wrote that I would, I wrote about having children. I haven't had any I'm nearly 44, I won't now have any. I have never wanted any [...] I think that there was a part of me that thought if I have a lot of, if I get married and have children, if I'm trying to fill a hole in me by having children that's not fair or right and I've never really articulated that before but in terms of affecting the choices that I've made, erm, that's definitely different than if he had just died.'

**Kay:**

'... it's probably only the last year that I've accepted this new person who doesn't smile as much... I still smile but I don't smile as much... I don't laugh as much. Erm, I'm very different, I'm not a sociable person like I used to be, and I've stopped, erm... digging my heels in against this new person now. I feel quite happy, you know I'm much quieter...'

The need to take responsibility for one's life appeared to be another important aspect of reconstructing a meaningful life over the years following loss. This was very often seen in terms of a new sense of purpose through giving, most notably in the form of a change of career or taking up voluntary work. The changes were not always immediate but rather a process which took place over a period of years:

**Yvonne:**

'I, had a big career change, and I started re-training from being a marketing manager in London, erm, in a private sector company to, moving into the civil service and trying to do something that was a bit more worthwhile, a bit more worthy a bit more erm, useful, a bit more...something...'

**Kay:**

'...now I'm a volunteer for [bereavement charity]... A move forward because it's something that has only come about because I lost [son].'

**Ben:**

'...and it's given me a huge appreciation of other people's difficulties and just what happens in life that... I don't think I would change... cos er, that for me feels very real. Very, you know I, I was in, I tried to build the ivory tower for myself and I lived in it [...]and the thought of living my life like that now... it doesn't seem like a life to me. Something's missing and so a bit of grit... like the [volunteering] this afternoon... I think I need to be near it.'

**Zoe:**

'... it's changed what I want to do with my life. I want to work as a medium full time! That's what I want to do... to help people who are on the floor like I was.'

**Sally:**

‘...since being bereaved it's kind of, you know encouraged me to look at certainly working with bereaved people as a, as a therapeutic thing. So I am, I mean I am thinking about possibly doing a counselling, a proper counselling course...’

Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement did not imply a completion of moving through grief. On-going grieving appeared to be a part of the lived experience of traumatically bereaved individuals regardless of the time elapsed between loss and the interview, and regardless of meaning made from the loss.

**Yvonne:**

‘Erm... well, this year it'll be erm, 18 years which for me, is just erm... I can't believe it's 18 years, and... It, it doesn't feel like it.’

**Kay:**

‘Yeah, if I can't sleep at night I do those [visualisations to help with anxiety] still.’

**Ben:**

‘...and... whenever that's happened in the past, these 11 years, since Dad... you're very aware that Dad won't meet that person. If we're to go on to.... you know... family and so on [...] So yeah that's... those feelings of er, sorrow and the sadness at not being able to change that’

**Laura:**

'Now I don't know how I would be with a mother... whose son had committed suicide. I don't know that I, I think I don't know that I would have taken that client just yet.'

**Zoe:**

'It feels in my body, it feels really erm, tiring like my arms feel tense and... erm... I dunno I feel, I can feel it in my body. I can feel it...'

### **24.2.1 Summary of sub-theme 2: Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement**

Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement was seen to occur most prominently in three areas. Participants described engagement with spirituality, both around the existence of a God and in broader terms. These broader terms spanned experiences of spirituality in nature and a newly developed worldview, specifically in terms of values, choices about how to live, and purpose. The experience of a transformed self often began with a loss of self which was experienced negatively, but participants described positive changes which took place over time as a result of traumatic bereavement. These changes were not necessarily reflected upon and usually took place over time – usually a period of years – following loss. Participants in some cases reported changes which were not necessarily viewed as positive transformative personal growth but which they accepted as a part of their new self. Finally, a newly constructed meaningful life after loss included on-going grieving of the loved one.

## 25 Master Theme III: Traumatic bereavement having a significant relational component

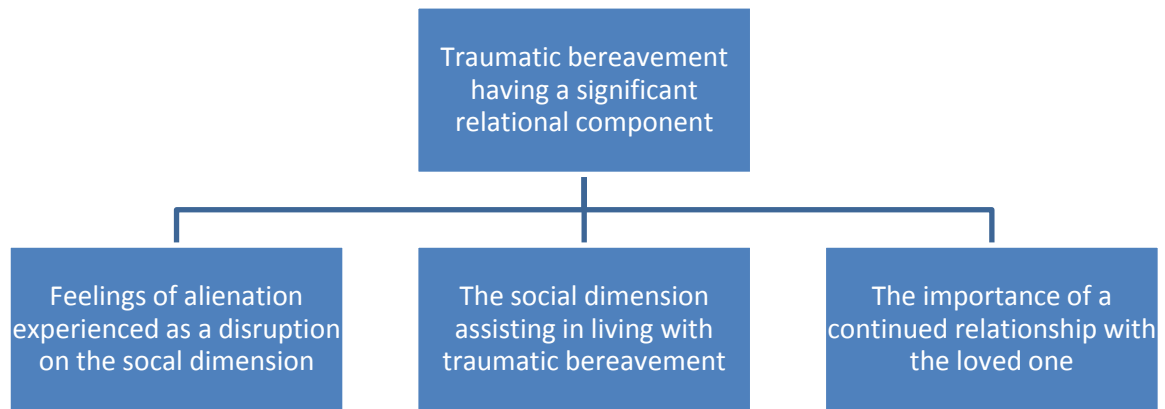


Figure 4: Master theme III

All participants described a relational component to grief pointing to the significance of the social dimension and the role of others in the lived experience of traumatic bereavement. This relational aspect of grief was complex in that it was neither exclusively beneficial nor disruptive to living with traumatic bereavement, but a combination of both. This is illustrated by the sub-themes which point to both benefit and disruption on the social dimension.

### 25.1 Sub-theme 1: Feelings of alienation as a disruption on the social dimension

There was a powerful sense of alienation or existential isolation that seemed to be intrinsic to the experience of grief. This was experienced irrespective of whether

participants were in the presence of others or not and was more about the lived experience of being alone in the pain of their loss and the impossibility of their experience being understood. This was described explicitly in some cases, and was evident for others through a difficulty in articulating their experience during interviews:

**Yvonne:**

'I still kind of came to the conclusion that they're my siblings they've got the same two parents as me we had the same upbringing and therefore we will all have the same response to this, and over the last 18 years [laughter] I've come to realise that is entirely not the case at all...'

**Kay:**

'It was... people had no... I felt like people had no idea.'

**Ben:**

'But people who are close to people who are close to the death, even though they may think about it after a month or two, people forget the quality of what death actually does to people'

**Sally:**

'But deal with it being, a finality, and I was going to have to deal with that. And [...] [silence] You know... or... I don't know, I don't think I can, I don't think I can describe it...'

Feelings of existential isolation were particularly strong for Participant 3 who was bereaved of her son. In addition to what she shared directly through her narrative, this was evident in the way that she often checked, during the interview, whether she was being understood. When she attempted to describe her pain she often stammered, made false starts, and struggled to articulate herself. She also described the pain of grief, likening it to childbirth, which is often considered to be one of the most physically painful experiences and one which can only be understood by another person who has been through it:

**Kay:**

'The pain... is... you, you can't describe the pain... you don't... erm, I had three lovely birth experiences so I'm not, I didn't have, it's, it's not, erm, it's not that... it's almost... erm, you can't describe the pain... it's like nothing else, erm... that doesn't make it a bad thing because you know it's a wonderful experience to go through ultimately but you can't describe the pain of the contractions so you, when you have a... only another woman whose given birth... but when you have a contraction you don't know what to do with yourself. You don't know whether to stand or sit, or, you don't know what position to get in because it's... it's like a wave of pain you, you, you can't, erm, you don't know what to do with yourself [...]. And... the pain of the grief was like that...'



Feelings of alienation were also described through specific examples of challenges on the social dimension such as being in the presence of others:

**Yvonne:**

'I didn't want us both whoever it was I was with, to be... put in the situation where, they didn't know what to say and I felt awkward and they felt awkward so...'

**Lucky:**

'... you know I said I speak to my mom and then just thoughts... random thoughts from time to time... and I can't really share them with someone... someone other than my mom or my therapist.'

**Kay:**

'I also went to... er... what do they call it? Er, erm, gathering of parents that, like a long, a weekend, erm, in Milton Keynes, and that was, it was... I had to be very brave to go, I felt... it was a big step to my... to take... 'cos it was less, it was before the first anniversary I think, or around that time.'

**Laura:**

'I could be around people but I needed to be quiet. I needed to be quiet, I needed them to just let me be quiet and I would remove myself...'

**Sally:**

'... around certain people you... you notice that you perhaps don't show the parts of you that you know, that are really... you, you learn to maybe you know... er, temper some...'

Challenges on the social dimension were experienced in response to the perceived or real discomfort of others around the bereaved:

**Yvonne:**

'...but I suppose my experience was that a few key people at the time didn't know what to say. And so having had that experience that people don't know what to say I think I learnt don't say anything about it. Don't tell people because you see their face and it's like. 'Ok! Im not sure what to do with that bit of information cos that's really horrible!'

**Kay:**

'...a few friends made comments about erm 'Come on, you need to start coming out again' or smiling again and... it made me, I was furious at those comments'

**Ben:**

'... erm, my housemate came in and she really shouldn't have done... she should have been at work and I told her and she, she'd met my dad and she just did not know what... to do... or say or anything and... I... I recognised that and really stepped in for her and let her off that hook, if you like.'

**Zoe:**

'People can see that you're crushed, and in a way it's harder because when they don't know what to say they tip toe around...'

**Sally:**

'Friends that didn't [pause] call when they said they'd call [slight laughter]... or people who didn't want to be around me really... you know friends who erm, struggled because I was sad and angry and not particularly fun! And some people can't deal with that very well and they don't spend much time with you for a while, you know I've... I've noticed that there's... I call them my, you know my fair weather friends...'

Participants also described a disruption on the social dimension resulting from a need to ensure that others were not concerned about them:

**Yvonne:**

'Yeah, in the sense of looking after other people. Or of looking after my mom or being strong for other people so they wouldn't worry about me being in [country] on my own.'

**Kay:**

You couldn't really talk to anybody... close.... because you always held back or you worried about what the consequences would be [...] Yeah or the impact of someone else then worrying.

**Ben:**

'But the point I guess I'm trying to make is... everyone else was aware of it but I wasn't... I was trying to, I was trying to be business as usual.'

**Sally:**

'But I think, after a fe... after a while... certainly with my parents... I found it harder... increasingly more difficult to be open about how I was feeling [...] Because... they lived so far away... that they felt distressed by my distress.'

Two participants described a need to move through grief in private, regardless of the way that others would engage with them. For Participant 2 there was a strong possibility of rape involved in her loss (by homicide). This mode of death which she repeatedly referred to as 'dirty', combined with her experience being characterized by uncertainty and betrayal at the hands of close family members, seemed to contribute strongly to her need to grieve in private.

**Lucky:**

'I just... I try... I've tried from the first day not to bring it in to my relationship with my husband [...] Erm... because it felt so dirty... and it felt so... I remember at the beginning it felt... ah... describing it in therapy and it was... it was in here... [pointing to chest and stomach]'

'I also felt in my relationship with my husband it was...it was better something that... that was my own. That I didn't share in our relationship... I felt it was easier for me to deal with it on my own or outside the relationship...'

'Erm... and then when this happened... you know I took that leap of faith with my husband... which... it seems like a bit of a ... scary time to do something like that [...]Because I felt... I felt dirty, I felt really quite dirty.'

'It felt like it was something very personal. It wasn't something that I wanted... you know my... my... I then had... I've got three step children...so when I came into my husband's life I was now for the first time I was like... a step mom... to these... well one of them was living in [country]... but to these two step children... [...]Erm... yeah but I remember it being something that I kept in a box. Like... for my running time in the morning.'

For participant 5, grieving privately was understood as allowing herself to feel her grief, which as discussed in master theme I, was an important part of living with traumatic bereavement:

**Laura:**

'Sort of almost censoring myself a little bit. Feeling... almost, didn't want to... I still wanted to keep it private... it was, I didn't want to... initially I had to cos it

was dominating but... after a while it would still pop up and I would go... no I'm gonna keep that to myself. I don't want to share that.'

'I still wanted to hold... hold on to it a little bit. I didn't want to just make sense of it. Sometimes I didn't want to make sense of it, didn't want to talk about it. I wanted to go 'no it's ok to feel this grief'

### **25.1.1 Summary of sub-theme 2: The social dimension as a disruption to the process of moving through traumatic bereavement**

The social dimension while offering significant support was also seen to present significant challenges. This was often in response to the perceived or actual discomfort of others but also a result of the bereaved person wanting not to be a cause for concern. In both instances participants found themselves needing to hold back aspects of their experience. In some instances, however, participants described periods of having a preference for moving through their grief privately.

### **25.2 Sub-theme 2: The social dimension assisting in living with traumatic bereavement**

This sub-theme is concerned with the way that living with traumatic bereavement was facilitated by the presence of others. Participants described a need or desire to talk about their experience and an importance in having an outlet for their emotions in the presence of others:

<b>Yvonne:</b>  ‘...we don’t hardly ever talk about it and that’s one of the kind of challenges that I have... that not many people in our family talk about my father. At all.’
<b>Lucky:</b>  ‘It’s a long time ago, its 8 years ago and I’ve had a lot of erm... a lot of erm, therapy since then [...] yeah so just... [interview] seemed an interesting forum to discuss it again’
<b>Kay:</b>  ‘I felt as though I was losing my mind at that time, but having that opportunity to every week go and spend a quality hour or hour and a half discussing it with somebody, I felt as... I used to walk out of that office, and I felt as though the earth, something had been lifted from me. You know and knowing that I had that opportunity again next week...’
<b>Ben:</b>  ‘... got off the train and my mom and my elder brother were there and I, I sobbed. I sobbed and mom sobbed. I couldn’t help it at that point’
<b>Laura:</b>

<p>'This process? It was great! I really felt that I've been able to... make connections and it's actually... actually it's... enhanced that sense of meaning making for me...'</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>'I wanted to be in a church, of any faith, and... I wanted to speak to somebody...'</p>
<p><b>Sally:</b></p> <p>'I would ring up on the phone and be upset, you know and I wanted to be able to, to, to talk to [parents] because they could comfort me...'</p>

In particular, participants pointed to the importance of support from family, partners, and friends:

<p><b>Yvonne:</b></p> <p>'All four of those people [friends] I've lost contact with. And I wrote them what must have been intensely, kind of, sensitive, personal stuff...'</p>
<p><b>Kay:</b></p> <p>'...and my husband recognised that and he was ah, so supported... I was really lucky that he was able to allow me that time to grieve, erm, and he never questioned any of the strange things I did.'</p>
<p><b>Ben:</b></p>



<p>'Erm, and so we [family] didn't really see each other. That was one problem [...]</p> <p>That's one thing we've all said we'd changed cos... we needed one another'</p>
<p><b>Zoe:</b></p> <p>'...they, they [friends] try and give you more love. If they, if they're not afraid of facing you. They try to be more kind and loving and nurturing cos I never had that from my family. I had no family.'</p>
<p><b>Sally:</b></p> <p>'I mean there have been other things that have consoled me but... other people [...]</p> <p>My family [...] Really consoled me'</p>

Participants also expressed feeling comfort in the presence of those who shared the experience of traumatic loss:

<p><b>Yvonne:</b></p> <p>'...the 4 of us were kind of going through his stuff. And... us all saying in the kind of way and feeling a bit weird about it erm, 'this feels really nice that we're together' and, and we were kind of closer and more supportive and supported...'</p>
<p><b>Kay:</b></p>

'...and obviously you're dealing with people that have all... erm... experienced the loss of a child so... you just feel a connection that's really comforting when you can't find comfort anywhere else.'

**Ben:**

'So we laughed and we cried [...]Yes, right, exactly... what I was gonna say was that's mourning properly, as it were... properly is not a good word but that was mourning [...]Yeah... that was grieving and we were doing it together'

The data also indicated that it was important to participants to talk about their loved ones; sharing the pride and admiration they had for them.

**Yvonne:**

'...the sentiment was erm, the person who lives on in the memory of the people that love them is not forgotten... and I suppose for me, that's why talking about him... is on the whole a positive thing...'

**Lucky:**

'... she was just so... amazing with children... and she was so... she so wanted to [inaudible]... she'd taken a lot of kids... when I say taken I mean she'd feed them, give them homework lessons, and then send them off to their families'

**Kay:**

'I brought his photo cos I wanted to show you.'

**Ben:**

'Erm, and somebody who certainly loved unconditionally and, and lived through us in many ways. Erm, perhaps to too great an extent...'

**Sally:**

'I'll sort of I guess finish the narrative and I will tell you about him as well cos that would be nice, to share that'

Participants also placed importance on the manner in which professionals, such as policemen, maintained professional standards and upheld professional boundaries. They described these interactions as having an impact on their experience:

**Yvonne:**

'I still feel some anger which was reflected in my journal about erm, how little support I appeared to get from my work at the time.'

**Lucky:**

'...there was a [police] man... he was, he was quite... you know he kept cornering me and asking me questions like personal questions... that had nothing to do

with what was going on like... and it felt really slimey it felt like he was hitting on me... it felt really, really quite, quite scary...'

**Kay:**

'...he was a LOVELY police officer he dealt with us in a really professional way, erm... er, for which I'm really grateful cos the memory of that sort of hour or so could've... could've been much more distress... you know... more.... distressing'

**Ben:**

'... sorted out my train fare and so on and they did a really good job and [employers] also helped the police find me they'd been... kind of... really amazing about it actually.'

**Zoe:**

'[teary] It was...despicable... It was like [mental health professional] wasn't talking about a person! It was like he wasn't talking to another person...'

### 25.2.1 Summary of sub-theme 2: The social dimension assisting in moving through traumatic bereavement

Participants were often facilitated by positive interactions on the social domain. In particular, they found comfort in those who were closest to them whether family,

partner, or friends. They also found comfort in those who had similar experiences or who shared in their loss. The ability to talk to others about the loss and the loved one was deemed important. Participants had mixed experiences regarding the extent to which professional standards and boundaries were observed by professionals and employers, and the data suggested that this had implications on the experience of traumatic bereavement.

### 25.3 Sub-theme 3: The importance of a continued relationship with the loved one

This sub-theme was very apparent in the data. It is concerned with the relationship between the bereaved and the deceased both before and after traumatic loss, and the effect of these on the experience of traumatic bereavement.

Many participants indicated that relationship to the deceased prior to death as well as the final interactions with the loved one had implications on their experience:

<b>Yvonne:</b>  ‘...I recognise now that he was probably becoming increasingly lonely. And erm, and that is quite, hard kind of thing to recognise...’
<b>Lucky:</b>  ‘I wasn’t as close to her as my sister was, but we still had fairly... probably a closer relationship than other people would have with their aunts as well...’
<b>Kay:</b>

'I used to wake up in the morning and the first thing I would see would be erm, the last time I saw [son] on the landing. In our, in our house... you know, that would be my first vision of the day and it would just go, round and round my head. He was, he was, he sort of brushed me aside... he was cross with me, erm, and that... it was debilitating...'

**Ben:**

'[sigh] it's worth saying I was extremely close to him.'

**Laura:**

'After that I just, it hit me very hard. Obviously we were close as a family...'

**Zoe:**

'...we kind of got pulled apart, and we just both, both of us just went into, I suppose, survival mode. And lost touch with each other.'

On the whole, all participants described the importance in maintaining a relationship with the loved one after the death:

**Yvonne:**

'Would he approve of that?' He certainly wouldn't really understand it I don't think but if he did understand it would it be ok...'

**Lucky:**

'... you know un... and I'd like to think that, you know maybe she chose me in her death, to, to be there.'

**Kay:**

I light a candle or I take flowers to the cemetery, I do something to connect me to him every day. Erm, music is a big one. That, you know I, if I feel like I haven't paid him much attention then just before I go to bed I'll just listen to a [musician's] track, and properly concentrate on it you know, just to... it's almost like just to acknowledge him.

**Laura:**

'I just felt like I needed to really try and be close to her. I did... I would light a candle for her every day.'

**Zoe:**

'I started going back [to the spiritualist church] and very soon I got messages, from my brother and... they told me things there's *no way* they could know there's just *no way* ... and then you know.. at the end I got so much comfort...'

**Sally:**

'That was comforting. Smell, smells were very comforting so I kept his deodorant, like body spray you know, aftershave, type thing... , you know on the ma..on on, in the bedroom and I would go and smell it every so often when I

wanted to be reminded of what he smelt like [...]Because that felt like a very...  
conjured up the memory of him really well.'

The importance of a continued relationship was particularly strong for Kay, who was bereaved of her son. What she described as her maternal need to look after him and be connected with him permeated her narrative:

**Kay:**

'...all I can think is it's a... your maternal... instinct. I said to [husband] 'you need to go out, I need to have the house to myself to do this' so he went out with the children and he left me to do this, I ha... I knew that I would have to wash his clothes. And it sounds ridiculous I know...'

'I would walk to the place where [son] died and take flowers or water for the flowers, and... and if it rained I'd be upset because it would be the stone... we, we had a plaque put there. Marble plaque with his name on, and erm, I would get really upset if I thought 'oh the flowers will be blown over in the wind', or 'the stone'll be dirty', you know...'

'...still now I have to, I hate it if, if I know the flowers need changing. It, it causes me real, erm, anxiety to think that he's neglected.'

'So I still, still feel that need. It's my maternal need to keep everything in order for him... I don't want to let him down, that's it I think.'



A continued relationship with the loved one was also a particularly strong aspect of moving through and indeed surviving traumatic bereavement for Participant 6. This was linked very closely linked to an awakened spiritual world.

**Zoe:**

'Oh my God... I don't think, to be honest. If it hadn't been for [his sense of presence] I don't think I'd still be here now. I think I would have killed myself. I really do.'

'Because he's helped me get through some horrific times. Worse than his death. At the time of his death I didn't think anything worse could happen to me but actually things, worse things have happened to me, and he's kept me going. My belief that he's around helping...'

'I got so much comfort... and the weirdest thing that used to happen when I went is I went to the toilet while I was there, I was just washing my hands there's a mirror... above the sink... I catch myself in the mirror, and every time I looked younger. I think [unclear]... I looked more serene, I looked younger, I looked healthier, and it, it... it used to...not just a little bit but quite marked. Enough to maybe do a double take in the mirror and there wasn't any like fancy lighting in there like you get in some changing rooms in expensive shops and I thought... 'My God! It's almost like I could see it was transforming me! That it was helping me! That much! It was, I was almost like blooming? Radiant? It was restoring.'

Participants also described a need to hold on to the belongings of their loved ones:

**Yvonne:**

'And er, and... sitting with my three siblings in my dad's house doing this kind of 'do you want this, do you want that?' cos my parents were divorced so we wer, the 4 of us were kind of going through his stuff.'

**Kay:**

'I was just constantly looking back on his Facebook, printing off quotes, printing off pictures, collating all the photographs, erm, just doing everything I could to be connected to him. You know, making scrap books, memory books, erm, putting everything of his in order in... so every...so that I didn't lose anything'

**Ben:**

'... we had some wine there and it's a very strong memory of him and I being on the floor of my dad's study, and papers around and... and we were both laughing and crying at what we're doing.'

**Sally:**

'Erm, at first I went to sleep with a jumper that he wore an awful lot... Yeah... zip up jumper that smelt still of him...'

Some participants not only sought this continued relationship with their loved one, but also described experiencing a sense of presence of the deceased as a part of this relationship. This was in all cases experienced as a source of comfort:

**Yvonne:**

'And sometimes I would kind of think I'd see a kind of shadow or something and I, and I knew I hadn't and yet somehow... it wasn't scary it was strangely comforting.'

**Laura:**

'I did find... I did, I found it comforting to get close. It was actually really... a much stronger presence of her after she was dead than before...'

**Zoe:**

'I could *feel* him, I could feel him stood right next to me. And it was the most incredible feeling. I can't, I don't even know how to begin to describe it, but... it's like I knew his soul was next to me. I knew it.'

Although there was evidence that she sought a continued relationship with the loved one, Participant 7 described exploring and firmly rejecting the idea of the loved one's presence after death:

**Sally:**

Sort of thinking about him or talking, to him in my head or out loud... and sort of thinking... 'could he possibly hear me? [... ] And then thinking 'Nope that's ridiculous [laughs]'. That's how I felt about it'

Participants also described the importance of a continued relationship through honouring the loved one:

**Kay:**

'So, we arranged the funeral, erm, it was a LOVELY funeral... it was really, it was perfect in every way. The vicar made, you know he let us play music, we played [genre] in the church with speakers outside, erm, there was... a lot of people couldn't ma... there was a lot of people there so there was people standing outside, maybe a hundred or more outside with speakers so the [genre] was 'round the village. He would have loved it. He really would have loved it...'

**Ben:**

'And... so just... down on my stomach and [the tattoo], it's a Chinese symbol for [tattoo description] and it's very private... nobody knows what it means unless I tell them and.. yeah... at the time it seemed, it seemed really appropriate. Erm... and yeah it's nice cos people ask and I can say... I can mention him...'

**Laura:**

'I don't do it every day for now but I did it absolutely for... 18 months every day I did it. I wouldn't ever not light a candle for her...'

In master theme II, many participants also described experiencing transformative personal growth in terms of growing more compassionate. Many had new careers or had taken up voluntary work usually in the area of counselling, and often in the

area of traumatic bereavement which they had experienced. This suggests a sense of meaning made from honouring the deceased through giving back in such a manner. Kay made explicit the way that her loss and her continued relationship with her son guided her better self:

**Kay:**

He was a very sort of deep person and on Facebook, not that long before he died he put a quote by Albert Einstein, and I didn't realise until a year or more after, I was going through, you know I was always looking, looking could I, what could I, clues and things I could find... and I found this quote on Facebook and it said, erm, 'only a life lived for others is worth living'. He didn't put who it was by he just put the quote on Facebook. Erm, and it was, when I realised, I mean Albert Einstein was considered to have Aspergers, which [son]... and that was, kind of a connection anyway. And I printed off that quote and I've laminated it and made it into a book mark, which I use and that's my kind of message from him, to say, it's almost as though he is telling me 'do something for someone else, and then you'll be alive yourself'

### **25.3.1 Summary of sub-theme 3: The importance of a continued relationship with the loved one**

A continued relationship with the loved one was a highly prevalent theme in the data. It was particularly strong for Kay who was bereaved of her son and who described loss eliciting her maternal instinct very strongly. This was also a very

prominent theme for Participant 6 who described the continued relationship which was enabled through a spiritual awakening as life-saving. Some participants described experiencing a sense of presence of their loved one, which in all instances was a source of comfort.

## Discussion

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The aim of this chapter is to discuss the way that the findings of this study support or challenge existing traumatic bereavement literature. The findings were seen to fit well with existential theory and therefore will also be discussed within this frame. As the guidelines state: ‘...it is in the nature of IPA that the interview and analysis

will have taken you into new and unanticipated territory' (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, pg.113), so it will be necessary to introduce literature that was not covered within the literature review. Finally, it is important to note that this discussion of themes offers one of many possible discussions of the lived experience of traumatic bereavement. Findings are discussed in a manner that illustrates the journey that an individual *may* embark on following sudden loss, but does not intend to suggest a fixed chronology or stage theory.

## 26 A loss of world order

Traumatic bereavement was seen to present a significant violation to bereaved individuals' basic beliefs and assumptions about the world, calling into question their sense of safety, control, justice, and coherence. This collapse of meaning, understood within current dominant theoretical perspectives as a loss of world order, emerged as a key component of the experience of traumatic bereavement, providing support for shattered world assumptions theories (Parkes, 1988; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Kauffman, 2002).

Characteristic of a loss of world order, feelings about the randomness and occasional malevolence of the world were strongly evidenced in participant narratives. Laura poignantly stressed the way that she was stripped of her illusions of safety in the world following her experience of bereavement by suicide. While she had encountered suicide in her professional life and found all instances shocking and deeply sad, the extent of shock she experienced following her personal experience of traumatic loss was indicative of the way that individuals

might make assumptions about their safety and the safety of those who are close to them. She made clear the shattering of these illusions when she stated "...this is a possibility now, and the safety of 'it's not gonna happen' had gone. That had been ripped away and it does happen. It happens to me, it happens to people who are really immediately close to me and it doesn't, it... nobody is spared." Lucky, bereaved by homicide, experienced significant feelings of vulnerability, a finding that resonated with Kauffman's (2002) shattered world model theory, which places specific emphasis on feelings of helplessness and lack of safety. Participants on the whole described an existential awakening, in which they found themselves becoming more cautious about the world, experiencing a heightened sense of vulnerability and lack of safety in a random universe.

The present study highlighted the way that a loss of world order can have a significant impact on the way that bereaved individuals will go on living. Manifestations of grief were evident on the psychological, physical, social, and behavioural dimensions, providing support for Rando (2014) who also identified what he called 'symptoms' on each of these dimensions. The study also found that a loss of world order resulting from traumatic bereavement had a significant impact on the spiritual dimension, where individuals sought to make meaning of their loss and their life moving forward.

Looking beyond bereavement literature to existential theory, Heidegger's Being-towards-death (Heidegger, 1927) following traumatic bereavement resonated with this aspect of the findings. Participants appeared to be forced out of an inauthentic mode of being which previously protected them from the full awareness of the



existential givens and the human condition as their sense of safety in the world was ripped away and they were confronted instead with the fragility and unpredictability of life. Bereaved individuals appeared to be thrown into a new ontological mode of being, characterized by a powerful embodied, psychological, and behavioural response, a sense of utter meaninglessness, and a significant disruption of the social dimension. These findings support those of Paidoussis (2012), discussed in more detail throughout the chapter, who found that traumatically bereaved individuals experienced a powerful embodied reaction, a loss of meaning, and an awakening to the human condition, leading to an awakened spirituality and a need to live with meaning.

## **26.1 The psychological response**

### **26.1.1 The psychological response: feelings of profound shock**

Participants reported experiencing feelings of profound shock accompanied by a sense of the loss being random and not making sense. Shock was in some cases seen by participants to have a protective function because of the way that it manifested in the form of emotional numbing or some sense of suspension of the full grief response. Kay described this protective nature of shock, stating that ‘... it numbs you almost... the whole thing at once I don’t think you could survive it.’

The feelings of shock as described by participants tended to involve a sense of being stopped short of a full appreciation of the loss, not just at the emotional level but also at the cognitive level. Participants also experienced a sort of temporary cognitive arrest which manifested in an inability to absorb/grasp what had happened, complete memory loss of the initial moments of traumatic bereavement, and patchy memory thereafter, demonstrating the sense of absurdity that is evoked by a collapse of world order. For some, shock was also seen to be experienced as a disruption at the perceptual level, with participants describing feelings of disembodiment or some sense of physical disconnection from the immediate environment and the situation in which they found themselves. This aligns with Paidoussis (2012), who also found that bereaved individuals, jolted into a new ontological mode of being, experienced profound shock including numbing, cognitive arrest, and the emergence of personal feelings about the loss of the loved one. She (Paidoussis, 2012) suggests that this shock throws individuals out of their ontic everydayness ('inauthentic mode of being) into an existential awakening through which they experience the world as unpredictable and unsafe, and through which become aware of the human condition. These ideas are consistent with the present study.

### **26.1.2 The psychological response: dealing with powerful emotional responses**

The results supported research that has found that the traumatically bereaved individual may experience a wide range of emotions (Pearlman et al., 2014; Rando, 2014). Feelings of great sadness, suffering and love underlined all

participant narratives. Other emotional responses to emerge from the data included those of regret (discussed later), guilt and responsibility, and anger.

It seemed to be important to understand the details/circumstances surrounding the death, demonstrating a need to make sense of the loss at the practical level. Included in this was the need to identify what or who was responsible for the death. All participants explored questions around whether they could have spotted any signs leading up to the death or otherwise have prevented it from happening. Since in all cases these feelings and questions of guilt and responsibility appeared to be unwarranted, the findings provided support for Janoff-Bulman (1992) and Rosof (1994) who assert that often, traumatically bereaved individuals would rather blame themselves in an attempt to regain a sense of control than to confront their helplessness in a random world. While none of the participants in this study appeared to be sitting with overwhelming feelings of guilt and responsibility at the time of the interview, it was evident that this was an area which had been considered at some stage following traumatic loss. Rosof (1994, pg. 15) states that feelings of guilt are strongest with parents who lose a child because 'you're job as a parent was to protect your child, and you could not'. While it is not possible to say that Kay, bereaved of her son, felt greater levels of guilt compared to other participants, she nevertheless echoed this sentiment of deep and pervasive guilt when she stated that '... to lose a child to suicide... I think you feel guilty more than you can put into words because you've failed. You've failed your job as a parent... you've ultimately failed...'

Anger is also commonly documented as a typical response to grief (Rando, 2014; Pearlman et al., 2014) and was a prevalent theme across participants although there was a great degree of heterogeneity with regards to whether the anger was directed towards self, the deceased, or others. Nevertheless, these feelings of anger once again point to the assault on the individual's sense of world order, justice, and their struggle to accept the unpredictability of life and the uncontrollability of the universe.

What emerges more generally from these findings is that the traumatically bereaved individual is likely to experience a range of both positive and negative emotions. While positive emotions did not emerge as a theme, they were nevertheless evident in participant narratives, for instance when loved ones (both deceased and surviving) were spoken about, or when participants described feeling supported by family and friends. Hagman (in Neimeyer, 2010) states that the role of positive emotions is often overlooked. The implication of this is that although painful feelings may often overshadow the experience of traumatic bereavement, positive emotions can play an important role in bereaved individuals' lived experience. A therapeutic approach should therefore look to address negative or painful emotional responses to loss, but also be alert to positive emotional responses which could be utilized in the therapy work to offer respite from the pain of grief.

### **26.1.3 The psychological response: turning away and confronting the pain of grief**

In addition to having an appreciation for the emotional responses a traumatically bereaved individual may experience, the need to confront and turn away from these feelings associated with grief also emerged as a key theme. The need to turn away from grief and the need to confront grief were not mutually exclusive, with participants appearing to move between the two. This yielded support for the Dual Process Model (Stroebe & Schut, 2007), which emphasizes the importance of both confrontation and avoidance of the loss.

Where turning away from the pain of grief was concerned, Yvonne stated ‘...it was almost a bit like in some ways it was put on pause because erm, I think because I had, I felt like I had to keep myself together. I had to keep, survive.’ Turning away from grief therefore need not immediately be viewed as maladaptive, but can in fact be seen as helping the individual to not become totally overwhelmed by grief, an idea also put forward by Pearlman and colleagues (2014). The data, however, also showed the way that avoidance of the loss can become problematic and hinder the mourning process if it continues. The results suggest that extended periods of turning away from the pain of grief may be problematic over time and can lead to bouts of depression such as in the case of Ben, and drug and alcohol misuse such as in the cases of Yvonne and Zoe.

It is not possible, from the findings of this study, to clearly demarcate when a healthy turning away from grief becomes a cause for concern. However, Ben saw traumatic bereavement as exaggerating his already existing tendency to deny himself of his emotional experience, suggesting that individuals may deal with their grief in a similar way to which they have responded to other negative life

experiences. Understanding this may provide useful insight into how they may or may not confront their traumatic loss and can thus inform therapeutic work. For instance, a person who has a tendency to avoid difficult feelings may need greater encouragement to confront the reality and the pain of their traumatic experience.

The need to confront the pain of grief was also evident for all participants. Kay said 'I wanted to be true... I even wanted to, like, grieve properly. I didn't want to mask anything or, I just wanted to go through the eye of the storm, almost...' The findings thus provide strong support for the Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Schut, 2010), showing grief to be a dynamic process rather than a static or linear one, with participants oscillating between needing to turn away from the pain of grief and needing to confront the pain of grief.

An existential perspective would support the Dual Process Model (Stroebe and Schut, 2010) to the extent that it recognizes that authenticity (confrontation) and inauthenticity (avoidance) are both aspects of Dasein. This means that the bereaved individual need not always confront the pain of grief, and turning his attention to other aspects of life which are restorative or unrelated to the loss would not be seen as problematic. Furthermore, it is not possible at all times to live in a state of authenticity, aware of one's mortality, so we are most of the time in an inauthentic mode of being. Following traumatic bereavement, however, the bereaved individual is thrown out of this inauthentic mode of being into an awareness of the human condition, and is forced to confront his lack of control in the world. Such moments of authenticity following traumatic bereavement appeared to play an important role in informing the way that the bereaved

individual would choose to go on living. Paidoussis (2012) also found that it was these moments of authenticity that traumatically bereaved individuals came to having the need to live with meaning, re-evaluate life and develop a sense of appreciation for being alive.

## **26.2 Traumatic bereavement eliciting a significant physical response**

Traumatic bereavement was also seen to have a significant impact on the physical dimension of experience, supporting Sprang and McNeil (1995) and Rando (2014). The physicality of grief was seen to manifest in different ways, to varying extents, and at different times following traumatic bereavement. Grief was experienced physically both in terms of pain (often originating in the stomach/heart region) and affecting the individual's physical appearance (eg. ageing, pale skin). Ben described how his grief expressed itself physically '... flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like I would have had erm... physically I would have aches, I would have slept badly, I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin'. The physicality of grief was experienced particularly strongly in the form of severe anxiety, panic attacks, and flashbacks, by one participant who was exposed to aspects of the violence associated with the death. It was clear that in such instances trauma symptoms are necessary to address since they appeared to constitute highly disruptive aspects of the bereaved individual's experience and could therefore be seen to interfere with mourning (Rando, 1993; 2013) and day to day functioning. Such descriptions provided support for Attig (in Kauffmann, 2002) who argues that grief seeps deep into all aspects one's being, affecting all

dimensions of lived experience. An existential perspective too would emphasize the importance of embodied lived experience, asserting that it is through our bodies which we experience and understand the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1945). It thus follows that any therapeutic approach should take this into consideration and, in this context, address the significant physical manifestations of grief.

Furthermore, that only one of the participants experienced extreme anxiety to the extent that trauma-focused therapy was required could be seen as giving weight to Friedman and colleagues (2006) who found that only a fraction of individuals who endure traumatic bereavement will be diagnosable with PTSD (and therefore, at least in the UK, qualify for therapeutic assistance). This does not, however, diminish the importance of PTSD or symptoms of trauma, but rather illuminates the way that the experience of traumatic bereavement is both broader and deeper than symptoms of trauma alone. The findings of the study suggest that PTSD is only one of many important and possible aspects of living with traumatic bereavement.

### **26.3 Behavioural manifestations of traumatic bereavement**

The behavioral manifestations of traumatic bereavement ranged from what may be seen to be 'typical' responses such as crying, to more idiosyncratic expressions of grief. Rather than homing in on specific behavioural manifestations, however, what appeared to be significant was the way that participants described feeling that their behavioral responses were out of their control. They described doing things which they would ordinarily not do but which they felt compelled to do because of a powerful sense of grief being all-encompassing, seeping deep into



every aspect of their being and often manifesting in unusual behaviors. Based on this finding, the present study aligns itself with Pearlman and colleagues (2014) who encourage thinking about the manifestations of grief as *adaptations* to traumatic bereavement rather than *symptoms*, in order to prevent automatically pathologizing what appear to be common, natural, and indeed, understandable responses to such an extraordinary upheaval in an individual's life.

As well as pointing to the importance of working therapeutically with the multitude of manifestations which might arise following traumatic bereavement, this finding also illuminates the way that thinking about grief and trauma responses associated with traumatic bereavement as pathology, may be problematic. This is not to deny the need for therapeutic assistance following traumatic bereavement but simply to suggest a subtle yet significant shift in perspective, which will in turn have implications for clinical practice. Such a perspective sits well with an existential approach which would seek to avoid pathologizing manifestations of traumatic bereavement (van Deurzen in Dryden, 2006).

## **26.4 Traumatic bereavement leading to a grappling with meaning**

The findings of this study provide strong support for the growing emphasis on the need for meaning which exists within current theoretical perspectives. This need for meaning became immediately apparent following loss of world order, supporting much of contemporary bereavement literature (Lehman et al, 1987; McIntosh et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 2003), existential theory (Frankl, 1984; Yalom, 1980; Spinelli, 2006), and existential research (Paidoussis, 2012). Specifically, the quest for meaning was seen to take place at the practical level, the spiritual level,

and the relational/social level, as outlined by Neimeyer and Sands (2011), and as in the case of Paidoussis (2012).

#### **26.4.1 The need for meaning at the practical level**

Following traumatic bereavement, participants demonstrated a basic need to absorb or grasp what had happened, highlighting from the start the significant role that meaning on the practical level played in the experience of traumatic bereavement. A difficulty grasping what had happened was demonstrated by 5 of the 7 participants who made statements about the randomness of the loss, often in light of what appeared to be good times prior to it. This provides support for cognitive information processing models (Horowitz, 1976) that state the bereaved individual is faced with conflicting information (beliefs about the safety of the world versus the sudden death of a loved one) in the face of traumatic loss. Kay expressed this sense of conflicting information and the loss not making sense when she stated that ‘... just before he died, he had, he seemed to work everything out.’ This sense of conflicting information brings into focus the importance of ‘narrative repair’, as put forward by narrative approaches (Neimeyer, 2000a; 2001; 2012; Neimeyer et al., 2010). These approaches, claiming that traumatic loss can present a significant disruption to the coherence and continuity of the individual’s narrative, heed resonance through the findings of this study which provide signs of narrative disruption from the earliest stages of traumatic loss.

Beyond trying to grasp or absorb what had happened, participants also experienced a need for cognitive mastery or some ‘account’ or explanation of how the loss happened (Parkes & Weiss, 1983, pg. 56). They attempted to make sense

of what had happened by attempting to understand the events in the run up to the death and the manner in which it occurred. The importance of such understanding was made particularly clear in the instance where such details were not available. Lucky, who was bereaved by homicide and had no clarity around the circumstances of her loss appeared to be stuck in what Rynearson and McCreery (1993) call a 're-enactment story' of the death, as she was still at the time of the interview attempting to piece together what had happened to her loved one, based on the facts available to her.

#### **26.4.2      Feelings of depression and despair: a loss of existential meaning**

The need for meaning was seen to go beyond the need to grasp the reality of what happened and understand the details and circumstances surrounding the loss. Confronted with an awareness of the randomness and the fragility of life, participants described a loss of existential meaning which resulted from traumatic bereavement. Loss of this deeper sense of meaning was expressed through feelings of despair, depression, and the sense of lacking a full engagement with life and relationships with others. Participants described being in a 'black hole', recalling that part of their journey as 'very grey', or 'black and dark' and having the sense of life being 'empty and meaningless'. Once again, these feelings of depression which emerged as a result of a loss of meaning resonated with the findings of Paidoussis (2012).

### 26.4.3 A search for existential meaning: the spiritual dimension

Spirituality was felt and expressed by participants in a number of different ways. Comfort in the outdoors, the need to take responsibility for one's physical safety, feelings, choices around how to live, and a renewed sense of purpose were all regarded as spiritual engagement. Regardless of how it was defined by participants, traumatic bereavement was seen to bring spirituality to the forefront of experience at some point over the course of their journey.

All participants engaged to some extent with questions of spirituality and the existence of a God and an afterlife. Zoe placed particular importance on the spiritual dimension where she gained great strength and encouragement through her new faith and beliefs. It appeared to be the case that her beliefs mitigated threats to meaning because she was able to make sense of her loss through her religious understanding of death and her belief in an afterlife. This supports literature which asserts that religious beliefs can facilitate finding meaning in loss (Davis et al., 2000; Rynearson, 2006; Coleman et al., 2004; Park & Halifax 2011; Wortmann & Park, 2009). Conversely, there was also evidence to support that traumatic bereavement might lead to a loss of faith (Finkbeiner, 1996), such as in the case of Laura who stated that '[faith is] another way of denial. It's another way of protecting myself...'

These findings provide support for literature which asserts that religion and spirituality '...can provide a system of meaning through which individuals

experience and understand the world' (Park & Halifax, 2011, pg. 358). Overall, there was a strong sense that spirituality, however defined, is connected with more deliberate and purposeful living.

Moving beyond religion and notions of faith, Ben captured the way that his lack of any spirituality previously impacted on his manner of being in the world which was not reflected upon, prior to his experience of traumatic bereavement:

'I didn't have a view on anything, you know like... I didn't have a political view, I didn't... I didn't know what my ethics were. I had some rules that I'd acquired from other people but it was all about erm... external verification for me... at the time it was about 'what would other people think, what's the social norm?' So I, within that... my spirituality didn't have a voice.'

This is in stark contrast to his sense of spirituality following traumatic bereavement. He said,

'I think spiritual anchor is quite a helpful term for me... yeah I don't get blown around so much now like even in emotional difficulties... like I do have some of those right now at the moment so I, as I said erm... I'd say I know who I am and I'm very definite in, yeah... what, what my priorities are and my sense of right and wrong and my sense of meaning in the world. Erm, that's all very clear to me and it's not clear as in I could write it all down but to the extent I don't know, I'm clear I don't know.'

From an existential perspective, our embeddedness means that our relationship to the world influences and affects our involvement in it, and this includes the

incorporation and rejection of various beliefs, values, and attitudes. Following traumatic bereavement, participants were thrown out of their inauthentic mode of being into an existential awakening, and over time, appeared to make a move towards authentic living. This authentic living involved understanding and accepting the parameters of life, including that one's possibilities are one's own (Heidegger, 1927). With this realization comes the realization that one is therefore free to choose what value to attach to things (Warnock, 1970), and a new appreciation for life made it important to do so. In line with Heideggarian thought (Heidegger, 1927), death thus individualizes human existence, opening up and 'disclosing' one's choices and possibilities for living. Participants described making deliberate choices about how to live and what to value (Heidegger, 1927), as seen clearly in the above excerpt from Ben's interview. In another example, Sally explained, '...some of my relationships have changed with people and perhaps the way I, some of the, my value systems as well.' Importantly, participants demonstrated a need for meaning, supporting the findings of Paidoussis (2012) and Frankl (1984) who emphasized the importance of finding meaning in our losses. This does not mean, however, that participants found the loss per se to be meaningful, but rather that they found meaning through re-engaging with the world and life in different way (Spinelli, 2006). Faced with the unpredictable nature of life, participants were seen to separate what felt meaningful to them from what did not, thereby reconstructing a meaningful existence in a random universe.

The search for meaning taking place predominantly on the spiritual dimension also resonates with existential theory. It is on this dimension that individuals are thought

to develop a worldview or an overall philosophy of life (van Deurzen-Smith, 1997) and this was very much the case for participants in the present study, all of whom grappled with the paradox of meaninglessness versus a need for meaning on the spiritual dimension. On the whole, the findings suggested that engagement with the spiritual dimension was a key aspect of the traumatically bereaved individuals' journey. Regardless of the manner or outcome of this engagement, all participants engaged in some exploration of spirituality and most participants found spiritual engagement to be beneficial. This resonates with the findings of Paidoussis (2012) who found that traumatically bereaved individuals search for meaning on the spiritual level, often by developing a reflected upon belief system or value system and by prioritizing important relationships.

## **26.5 Re-constructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement: transformative personal growth**

### **26.5.1 Loss of self following traumatic loss**

A key aspect of the participants' journey following traumatic bereavement involved a transformation of self. Following sudden loss, all participants appeared to experience what Stolorow (2009) refers to as a form of existential death, wherein the traumatically bereaved individual loses his sense of being. All participants described a sense of having lost a part of themselves, their self-esteem, or experiencing some disintegration of self following traumatic bereavement. Kay, for instance, who was bereaved of her child remarked 'I just feel sorry for [daughter] and [son] because they kind of lost a little, they lost their mom in a way... they lost

their brother, but they lost their mom too, a bit... because I'm not the same person.'

She battled this sense of being a 'new person' whom she 'hated', providing support for the significance of secondary losses (Rando, 1993; 2013) such as a loss of identity. This loss of self was particularly strong for Sally, who bereaved of her partner, stated 'everything I knew, everything that I thought was my future... you know [...] A marriage with him, children with him. A home with him... all the, you know... all the things we were going to do together... erm... [...]All of that changed...' Given the importance of the spiritual dimension, another significant secondary loss might be that of religious belief. Laura said of her loss of faith, '...a sense of some sort of super natural being that you could ask for some divine intervention in the worst possible moment. That has gone.'

The sense of being forever changed was evident for 5 of the 7 participants. Lucky stated that 'life is never gonna be the same after that experience. It was now a part of my fabric, it was about something that was gonna be part of me forever.' These findings provided further support for cognitive constructivist approaches and narrative therapies as put forward by Neimeyer (1993; 2009) who asserts that we come to know ourselves and our world through the stories we tell. Narrative repair (Neimeyer, 2000a) in this case, would involve confronting and accepting changes to one's narrative in terms of the future and one's sense identity. The need to integrate the loss into one's narrative was made explicit by Laura who said '...how I sort of get over it, if I ever get over it but a bit more integrated it, processed it, journeyed through it...'



### 26.5.2 Developing a new identity

Through this process of integration, participants moved from this existential death towards identifying elements of transformative personal growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006; 2007). The most salient areas of growth included 1) greater and on-going self-understanding 2) greater compassion, and 3) a greater appreciation of life and making deliberate choices around one's values and how to live. There was a sense then, that the way participants understood their experience and structured their narrative conferred meaning on it and gave direction to their future (Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Polkingherne, 1988).

Participants reported a need to take responsibility for their life in their attempt to construct a meaningful existence following traumatic bereavement. This, again, resonates with existential philosophy which states that the awareness of finitude and mortality can lead to a fuller, more authentic engagement with life (Heidegger, 1927; Yalom, 2011). Sally said

'I think I feel... erm... tsk... like I've... want to make sure I don't let life pass me by? Erm... Not that I think I was doing that before, but... I definitely try and make a lot out of life now'

This was often seen in the need for a sense of purpose which participants sought through giving, most notably in the form of a change of career or taking up voluntary work. For all participants this was work within the area of counselling, psychotherapy, or another area which involved assisting those in emotional pain.

Ben described his sense of being drawn to this type of work as a result of his own experience:

‘...and it’s given me a huge appreciation of other people’s difficulties and just what happens in life that... I don’t think I would change... cos er, that for me feels very real. Very, you know I, I was in, I tried to build the ivory tower for myself and I lived in it [...] and the thought of living my life like that now... it doesn’t seem like a life to me. Something’s missing and so a bit of grit... like the [volunteering] this afternoon... I think I need to be near it.’

Laura also talked about an ability to be within the space of others’ suffering to a greater extent, saying ‘I’m able to be with my, in the, in the...in the trauma of their life and the dilemmas of their life and just, I’m able to be more real in the space with them.’ Sally reported that ‘...since being bereaved it’s kind of, you know encouraged me to look at certainly working with bereaved people as a, as a therapeutic thing. So I am, I mean I am thinking about possibly doing a counselling, a proper counselling course...’

On the whole there seemed to be a change of worldview towards one which was no longer distorted by misperception, illusion, or disconnection from the heart. With this came a need or desire to be close, as the poet Virgil puts it, to ‘the tears of things’. This was indicative in the participants’ greater sense of compassion and a desire to be in solidarity with the suffering of others. What emerged quite strongly was that what seemed to transform participants was their ability to create and sustain meaning out of their experience of great love and great suffering.

Importantly, it was not the loss itself which promoted growth but the struggle with the painful ramifications of it (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006; 2007).

The findings of an existential awakening, transformative personal growth and an authentic engagement with life speak to literature on post traumatic growth studies such as that of Tedeschi and Calhoun (2008) who outlined 5 types of experiences that indicated personal growth, all of which were evident in the present study, as illustrated in the examples provided in parentheses:

- 1) The emergence of new possibilities (eg. change of career, taking up voluntary work)
- 2) A positive change in relationships (eg. greater compassion, investing more in relationships)
- 3) Increased sense of personal growth (eg. sense of being a stronger person, better understanding of self)
- 4) A greater appreciation for life (eg. taking greater responsibility for choices)
- 5) Changes in spiritual and religious beliefs (eg. developed religious or spiritual life)

While all participants met the above criteria, the findings suggested that the transformation which took place following traumatic bereavement transcends post traumatic growth, as defined by Tedeschi and Calhoun (2008). Participants appeared to have taken in the loss not only at the cognitive level, but at a 'fundamentally deeper' (Attig in Kauffman, 2002, pg. 57) level thus adopting 'a new way of Being-in-the-world physically-emotionally-cognitively-spiritually' (Barnett,

2009, pg. 32). This is seen to be a significant finding since the present study identified current perspectives as failing to understand traumatic bereavement from a deeper than cognitive level.

Conversely, there were aspects of a changed self which were not experienced as positive growth. Yvonne, who was bereaved of her father by suicide, chose not to have children as a result of her experience. She made a distinction between modes of death, stating that if he had died of natural causes she would not have decided against having children. Once again, although it is not possible to expand on this further through the findings of this study, there is support for the importance of understanding the impact of different modes of death on bereaved individuals (Pearlman et al. 2014). Although participants accepted that they were changed and that there were positive aspects of this change, this did not take away from the difficulty they faced. Kay states ‘...it’s probably only the last year that I’ve accepted this new person who doesn’t smile as much...’, indicating that as Silver, Wortman and Crofton (1990) say, it is important not to focus only on the positive changes but to be mindful of and sensitive to the less positive changes which bereaved individuals experience.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the construction of a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement did not mean that grieving was complete or that participants had reached some end point in their journey. Indeed, shock was not restricted to the initial aftermath of traumatic loss. Participants described living with a degree of shock and disbelief about their loss several years after it occurred. Sally said ‘... it’s... it’s slightly strange to relay the story because in some ways it

still feels like it...it was a film! [laughs]. It's almost still not real!' Regardless of time elapsed and/or meaning made since loss, feelings of sadness, disbelief, and grief appeared to remain in the lives of the participants indicating that a newly constructed meaningful life after loss included an enduring sense of loss of the loved one. Ben referred to the way that a new relationship would remind him of his loss, saying that '...whenever that's happened in the past, these 11 years, since Dad... you're very aware that Dad won't meet that person. If we're to go on to.... you know... family and so on...' Similarly, Kay reported that she still used techniques she had learned in therapy to manage her anxiety suggesting that not only do these feelings pervade the lived experience of the traumatically bereaved individual, but that they may be brought into focus more due to certain triggers. This also provides support for what Rando (1993) calls a 'subsequent temporary upsurge of grief' (STUG) or Stolorow's (2015) use of the term 'portkeys'. Indeed, grieving is seen from an existential perspective as the 'work of a life-time' requiring a 'continual re-negotiating and constructing of meaning' (Ingram et al., 2000, page 79). This idea that the deceased is very much a part of the bereaved person's reconstructed life is further developed and emphasized in terms of the importance of a continued relationship with the deceased, which Paidoussis (2012) also found in her study.

The personal dimension as understood from an existential perspective can elucidate the experience of losing and regaining one's sense of being following traumatic bereavement (Stolorow, 2009). On this dimension, participants were seen to grapple with notions of selfhood, managing the tensions between

confusion versus identity, and disintegration versus integrity (van Deurzen-Smith, 1997). Finally, meaning appeared to be created on this dimension through a developed sense of self-worth. It seemed to be the case that by being thrown into a mode of Being-towards-death and being forced to confront the existential givens of death, meaninglessness, and isolation, participants were, over time, able to exercise greater personal freedom through an authentic engagement with life. This is an idea which is highly prevalent amongst existentially oriented researchers, practitioners, and writers. Recall, Paidoussis (2012) found that traumatic bereaved individuals experienced a 'spiritual awakening' through which they began to engage with life in a more meaningful way. Young (in Barnett, 2009) states that in recognizing our Being-towards-death, we can find meaning and purpose. Yalom (1980, pg. 9) says that recreating a meaningful existence involves exercising one's personal freedom and being 'the author of his or her own world, life design, choices and actions'. Condrau (1998, page 106-107) sums up this idea succinctly, saying that awareness of our mortality encourages us to 'recognize that death calls upon us to take over our existence' and 'live it in freedom and self responsibility'. The awareness of our mortality makes us 'anxious not about our own death per se, but about our life and the way we live it in the light of our mortality (van Deurzen, 1997).

## **27 Traumatic bereavement having a significant relational component**

While the philosophy of Heidegger (1927) has been central to this study's understanding of traumatic bereavement, its findings part ways with his philosophy

in terms of its emphasis on the relational aspect of death, which he seems to neglect (Barnett, 2009, van Deurzen-Smith, 1997, Sadler, 1969; Habermas, 1985; van Deurzen and Kenward, 2005). The findings of the present study showed a strong relational component, or 'context embeddedness' (Stolorow, 2009) to grief, pointing to the significance of the social dimension and the role of others in the lived experience of traumatic bereavement. The participants' descriptions illustrated the way that feelings of alienation and existential isolation seem to be inherent to the experience of traumatic bereavement (Paidoussis, 2012; Barnett, 2009; Stolorow, 2009; Young in Barnett, 2009). The findings resonated therefore, with what Stolorow (2009) refers to as an 'unbridgeable gulf' (pg. 14), a deep chasm which separates those who have been traumatically bereaved from those who have not: that the world of the traumatically bereaved is 'fundamentally incommensurable' with the world of others (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992, pg. 467). This sense of estrangement was in part demonstrated in participants' difficulty articulating their experience. This was evident at the linguistic level through false starts, stammers, and repetitions, as well as through explicit mention of the difficulty in expressing themselves. During the interview, for example, Kay often checked whether she was making herself clear, asking 'do you understand what I mean?' More explicit was her attempt at describing the pain of grief, which she compared to the pain of childbirth; an experience which is universally thought of as excruciatingly painful to the extent that it can only be understood by a person who has first-hand experience of it:

'The pain... is... you, you can't describe the pain... you don't... erm, I had three lovely birth experiences so I'm not, I didn't have, it's, it's not, erm, it's not that... it's almost... erm, you can't describe the pain... it's like nothing else, erm... that doesn't make it a bad thing because you know it's a wonderful experience to go through ultimately but you can't describe the pain of the contractions so you, when you have a... only another woman whose given birth... but when you have a contraction you don't know what to do with yourself. You don't know whether to stand or sit, or, you don't know what position to get in because it's... it's like a wave of pain you, you, you can't, erm, you don't know what to do with yourself [...] And... the pain of the grief was like that...'

The difficulty of this inherent sense of existential isolation was exacerbated by encounters on the social dimension, supporting research that has found that survivors often perceive comments by others which are intended to be supportive, as hurtful. Dyregrov (2003-2004) refers to 3 categories in which this may occur.

- 1) Anticipated support that failed to appear
- 2) Avoidance of the traumatically bereaved individual
- 3) Offering support/advice that was viewed as unhelpful

Kay stated "...a few friends made comments about erm 'come on, you need to start coming out again or smiling again' and... it made me, I was furious at those comments." Sally spoke of her anger and disappointment at friends 'that didn't [pause] call when they said they'd call [slight laughter]... or people who didn't want to be around me really... you know friends who erm, struggled because I was sad



and angry and not particularly fun! And some people can't deal with that very well and they don't spend much time with you for a while, you know I've... I've noticed that there's... I call them my, you know my fair weather friends...'

Another factor which emerged from the data was the importance of maintaining professional standards and upholding appropriate professional boundaries. There does not appear to be any research which highlighted this specifically, but this element of social ineptitude points to the importance of appropriate training for professionals such as policeman and mental health professionals in dealing with the traumatically bereaved.

The need to protect others from the pain of one's grief was also a prominent aspect of the bereaved individuals' experience on the social dimension. Bereaved individuals seemed to have a desire to 'look after' those who may be concerned for them by concealing the extent of their pain. Although the present research is unaware of literature which specifically refers to this phenomenon, it does appear to be an important aspect of traumatic bereavement and a significant contributing factor to the feelings of alienation that ensue. It seems significant therefore to understand this further, since the perception that others are unable or unwilling to cope with their pain may have implications on the likelihood of the bereaved individual seeking support or what Stolorow (2009) calls a 'relational home' (Stolorow, 2009); an inter-subjective context where emotional trauma can be 'held, rendered more tolerable, and, hopefully, eventually integrated' (pg. 49).

In spite of the sense of isolation that appeared to be built into the experience of traumatic bereavement, participants were nevertheless at times able to find comfort on the social dimension. Stolorow (2009) stresses the importance of a 'relational home' where the emotional world of the traumatically bereaved can find expression. Ben recalled, with reference to the way that his siblings and he rarely saw each other following their traumatic loss:

'That's one thing we've all said we'd changed cos... we needed one another'

In the absence of such a relational home, a context within which his emotional pain could be held, Ben described becoming distanced from his emotional and spiritual worlds and experiencing bouts of depression. Sally recalled regularly calling her parents for comfort, stating that her family was able to 'really console' her. When she no longer felt she could draw on their support, she sought therapeutic assistance. The context embeddedness of emotional trauma and the need for a 'relational home' was thus strongly represented in the findings of this study, supporting Stolorow (2009). The ability to simply talk about their experience was seen as helpful by participants, providing support for the therapist as validating agent (Landfield, 1988) but more broadly speaking, providing support for the linguistic-relational aspect of traumatic loss (Stolorow, 2009) and the idea that we become ourselves through mutual interaction and open contact with others (Buber, 1923).

In spite of these feelings of alienation and solitude it was also apparent that comfort may be found in the presence of others, particularly those who have had similar

experiences. This may include family to whom the loss was also significant (although in some cases this was not the case), or it may be found in previously unknown individuals who endured similar traumatic experiences. The tension between the feelings of singularity and estrangement which accompany traumatic bereavement, and the comfort which came from understanding-others in the present study, was remarkably similar to the way that Stolorow (2009) describes and makes sense of the relationality of finitude. He describes a longing for 'emotional kinship' in response to the feelings of solitude that are evoked by traumatic bereavement, stating of his own experience, that his '...only hope for being understood was through connection with another person who knows the same darkness' (Stolorow, 2009, pg. 49). Kay said of the organization from which she sought support:

'...you're dealing with people that have all... erm... experienced the loss of a child so... you just feel a connection that's really comforting when you can't find comfort anywhere else.'

However Stolorow (2009) does not appear to be arguing that it is only those who have endured such emotional trauma that can support the traumatically bereaved. He cites Heidegger (1927) in his recognition that emotional trauma is built into the basic constitution of human existence (albeit challenging his assertion that death is non-relational) to argue that it is our common finitude and the finitude of those relationships which we treasure, which deeply connects us with one another and makes it possible to provide what George Atwood (cited in Stolorow, 2009) calls 'the incomparable power of human understanding' (pg. 49).

At first glance it was difficult to see the significance of the common use of a wave as a metaphor to describe the interplay between shock and experiencing emotional pain. On further consideration of the feelings of estrangement versus the need to be understood, the use of metaphor to describe experience appeared to have greater significance than perhaps the particular metaphor used. The word 'metaphor' comes from the Greek 'to carry across', meaning to 'carry a meaning across'. Metaphor carries meaning in a way that definition and delineation cannot. It stirs something which is deeper than that which is at the cognitive level of awareness. It resonates with an inner knowing and can provide a means to communicate that which feels indescribable. Of course metaphor cannot provide a perfect description of an experience, but it can, as T.S. Eliot said of poetry (which uses metaphor) be a 'hint half guessed'. It can provide an effective way of describing one's experience and it can provide a 'way in' to understanding the experience of the other. This finding could be seen to support the argument put forward by Attig (in Kauffman, 2002), who insists that the experience of traumatic bereavement affects all dimensions of lived experience, calls for a new embodied way of apprehending the world, and therefore renders the current theoretical and practical emphasis on the cognitive level alone, as inadequate. He emphasizes the depth and pervasiveness of the experience of traumatic bereavement, and certainly, the findings of this study support his argument. The use of metaphor as a vehicle for describing one's experience is thus highly significant given the paradoxical feelings of existential isolation and the sense that one's pain cannot be understood, versus the importance of the 'linguistic-relational' that is said to be

characteristic of the experience of living and coping with traumatic bereavement (Stolorow, 2007). The finding can thus be extended to support the way that poetry and the creative arts can surpass the mind and act, as the poet Mary Oliver (1994) says, as ‘fires for the coal, ropes let down to the lost, something as necessary as bread for the hungry’. Placed in this light, the use of metaphor has implications for the way that the grief component of traumatic bereavement might be worked with in the therapeutic setting.

The importance of the linguistic-relational was also seen in the desire to talk about the loved one. In the present study, this involved sharing the pride and admiration the bereaved individual had for the loved one, but given the importance of the relationship prior to loss (discussed later) it may involve reviewing the relationship – including its negative aspects – as a part of processing and reconstructing a coherent self-narrative and integrating the loss.

The relationality of traumatic bereavement was also illustrated in the participants’ manner of engaging with others following the reconstruction of a meaningful life after loss. Participants described feelings of love both for the deceased and surviving others following traumatic bereavement. This finding resonates strongly with Stolorow’s (2014) emphasis on the inter-relatedness of love, loss, and human finitude. It was apparent that Being-towards-death involved owning up not only to one’s own finitude but also the finitude of others, meaning that Being-towards-death always includes a Being-towards-loss (Stolorow, 2014). Laura made this explicitly clear when she said of her experience of traumatic bereavement:

‘...it’s helped me to face death more, it’s helped to turn around and face the, my biggest fear which is my son’s death’

As previously discussed, another way that participants described transformative personal growth in relation to others was through their involvement in supporting those with emotional pain. Many explicitly reported feeling greater compassion for others. These findings considered, Being-towards-loss was also seen in the form of more meaningful engagement with others. Laura said of this:

‘How do I live differently. I definitely feel I do. I feel [sigh], my... I have a lot, I’m *investing* much more of my connections with other people.’

### **27.1 The nature of the relationship to the deceased**

The findings of the study were in support of literature which states that the nature of the relationship with the deceased is a significant factor in the impact of the loss (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes & Weiss, 1983). Clinical writings have often stated that those with good relationships to the deceased will see better adjustment to the loss than those with conflictual relationships or ambivalent feelings (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes & Weiss, 1983). However, although clinicians have generally supported these claims, few studies have been able to verify them. In fact Van Doorn et al. (1998) and Prigerson and colleagues (2000) have found that those bereaved of close and supportive marital partners were at greater risk for complicated grief. Bonnano et al. (2002) found that excessive dependency (over-reliance on the other to feel secure and manage daily tasks), are at greater risk of poorer outcome. While the results of this study make it possible to say that the nature of the relationship

with the deceased is an important factor, like existing literature and research, the results beyond this are mixed.

In Ben's case, the closeness of the relationship appeared to be testament to the impact of the loss and the pain which was experienced as a result, with him establishing very early in the interview, that 'it's worth saying I was extremely close to him. Erm, after his, his death me and my middle brother... I have, I have two older brothers... wrote down the roles he played for us, you know in our lives and... we got to 17 major headings, you know er... mental and that, that kind of thing... and certainly best friend for me.' Following his traumatic loss, Ben described turning away from his emotional world for extended periods of time and experiencing 'bouts of depression'. This supports findings that close relationships present greater difficulty but it would not be accurate to say that Ben saw poorer outcome overall compared to those with conflictual relationships. Indeed, he appeared to have successfully reconstructed a meaningful life following loss and seen significant transformative personal growth. Bonnano et al. (2002) who found that partners with excessive dependency (over reliance on another person to feel secure and manage daily affairs) are at risk for poorer outcome. Sally's narrative provided support for the finding that those who rely on their partners will find adjustment more difficult. She said:

'I ... have always... been... had... elements of low self-esteem... and [deceased] would always be someone who, you know... boosted my self-esteem'

She recalled ‘...having to teach [herself] how to get [herself] out of bed... how to make... er... make things ok’, and yet this finding does not support the idea that those who are dependent will see poorer outcome, since she too showed evidence of transformational growth, saying:

‘I feel like I’m... know I’m a strong person. So that’s good...’

Furthermore, the sense of having unfinished business appeared to be present in the case of Kay, who in spite of having a very close relationship with her son was for a long time disturbed by regret that their last interaction had not been a positive one. For Yvonne, her loss seemed to evoke feelings of regret that she had not spent more time with her loved one who she in hindsight believed may have been lonely. It is not possible to say, however, whether this in particular had a negative impact on her process thereafter. While the findings appear to be mixed in terms of the finer details, it seems clear that the nature of the relationship with the deceased has an important impact on the loss, and therefore further investigation into this area is suggested. The precise manner in which this occurs appears to be complex and requiring further investigation, but it is apparent that any therapeutic approach would need to be mindful to incorporate dealing with any complications that may arise.

## **27.2 The importance of a continued relationship with the deceased**

Contemporary psychodynamic literature argues that maintaining a bond with the deceased is an effective coping mechanism that helps to resolve the grief (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes & Bowlby, 1970). The importance of a continued relationship was



strongly represented in the current study, supporting the already existing body of literature on continuing bonds (Bowlby, 1980; Parkes & Bowlby, 1970; Klass et al., 1996; Attig, 2010).

Some of the ways in which continued bonds were maintained included the possession of tangible objects to the deceased, continuing activities previously shared with the loved one, communication with the deceased, purposeful activities that acted as reminders of the deceased (eg. listening to specific music), active reminiscing, and honouring the loved one (Rando, 2014). This maintenance of the bond gives weight to the movement away from the idea that successful grieving involves 'letting go' of the loved one (Freud, 1917, Lindemann, 1944), and highlights the importance of making the shift from loving them in presence to loving them in absence (Attig, 2010), and integrating the loved one into the new self-narrative as a crucial part of meaning making (Klass et al., 1996).

The need for a continued relationship was particularly strong for Kay who was bereaved of her son. She described a very strong maternal need to continue to look after him and carry on her role as his mother and this need permeated her narrative. Maintaining a continued relationship with the deceased was also particularly important for Zoe, who said:

'If it hadn't been for [his sense of presence] I don't think I'd still be here now. I think I would have killed myself. I really do.' In this case, the continued relationship was strongly connected with an awakened spiritual world (Steffen & Coyle, 2012) and was seen to assist the bereavement process. The present study also supported

findings that a sense of presence - another means of maintaining the bond with the deceased - provides comfort to the bereaved individual (Chan et al., 2005; Doran & Downing Hansen, 2006). This lends support to the growing body of literature which argues the normality of these experiences (Datson & Marwit, 1997; Kalish & Reynolds, 1973; Klass and Walter, 2001) and the claims that they are more likely to assist than hinder the bereavement process.

As discussed previously in this chapter, traumatic bereavement was linked to transformative personal growth where participants reported feeling that they were more compassionate towards others or that they found new purpose in therapeutic work, either on a voluntary basis or as a new career. Developing this theme, Kay described the way that her continued relationship with her son guided her better self, an idea also put forward by Pearlman and colleagues (2014). Having found a quote which he had posted on social media, she said:

“...it's almost as though he is telling me 'do something for someone else, and then you'll be alive yourself.’”

This provided support for literature that states that connections with the deceased can act as a moral compass (see, eg. Klass & Walter, 2001; Marwitt & Klass, 1996; Stroebe & Stroebe, 1991) for the traumatically bereaved.

However, although the participants of this study appeared to have healthy continued bonds, the study does acknowledge that some continued relationships may hinder the bereavement process, aligning itself with literature (eg. Field & Worgin, 2011; Steffen & Coyle, 2012) that distinguishes normal from unresolved

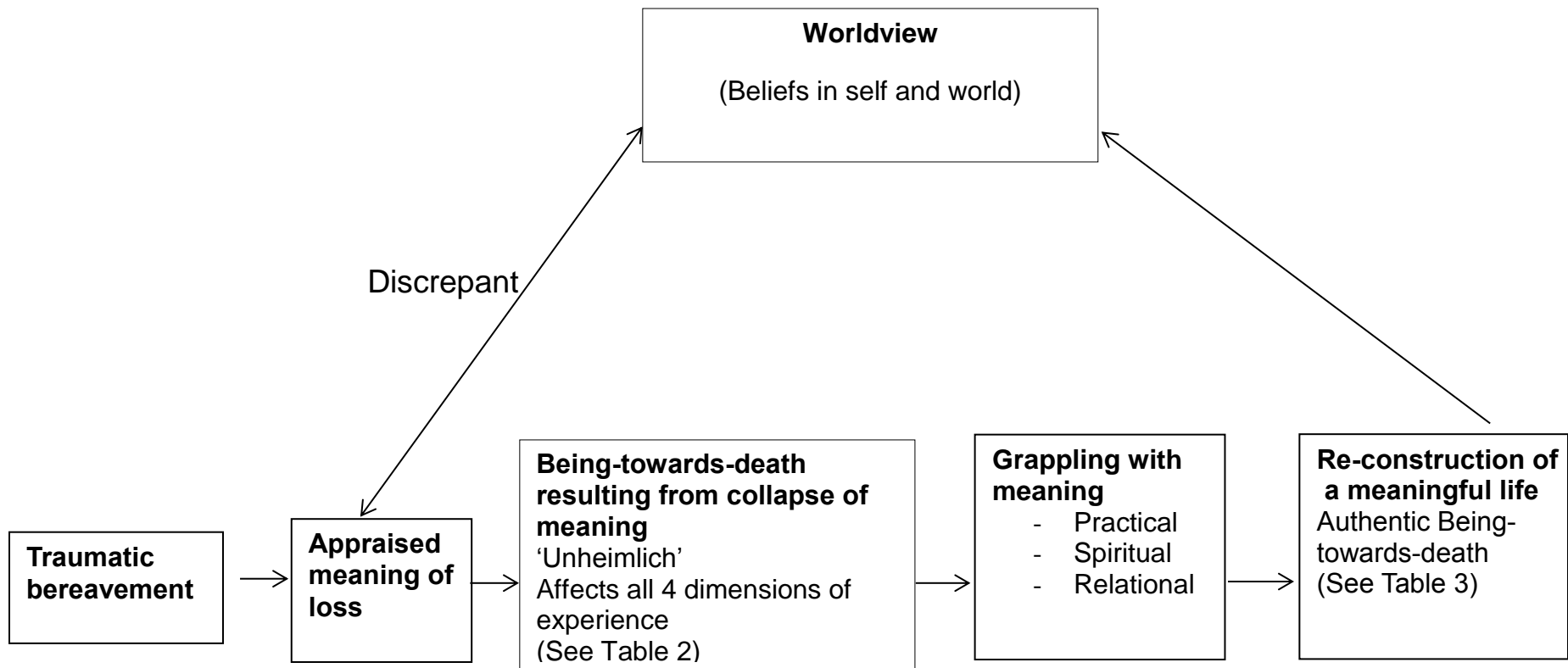
loss based on whether the bond is transformed to a mental/symbolic one, or whether there is an attempt to maintain a more concrete tie (failing to acknowledge the person's death).

### **27.3 Living with traumatic bereavement: A worldview model**

Traumatic bereavement was seen to lead to a loss of world order, throwing the individual into an altered mode of Being. This altered mode of being, or Being-towards-death, resembled at first what Heidegger (1927) called 'unheimlich', or a sense of being 'not-at-home-like.' This collapse of world order, or 'unheimlich', was disclosed by the existential anxiety, and manifestations of this were seen on all four dimensions of existence. The traumatically bereaved individual was then seen to grapple with meaning at the practical, relational, and spiritual levels in an attempt to reconstruct a meaningful existence. Through this journey, the bereaved person was seen to experience transformative personal growth. The individual, holding an awareness of the human condition and the existential givens, eventually exercises greater personal freedom by making more deliberate decisions about how to live, placing greater value on important relationships and altogether using this awareness to live a fuller life with purpose. This authentic Being-towards-death, too, has an impact on all four dimensions of experience.

Using the meaning-making model put forward by Park (2010), the findings of the present study have been used to illustrate the experience of the sample from an existential perspective. It is important to note, however, that although all participants of the present study were able to make some meaning from their

experience and reconstruct meaningful lives, research has shown the search for meaning may not always be successful (McIntosh, 1993; Keese et al., 2008; Lehman et al., 1987). Indeed, a new worldview may conceive of a world which is cruel, unsafe, unfair and meaningless, with no meaning to be found. Furthermore, it is important to emphasize that this diagram does not intend to provide a model or series of stages which a traumatically bereaved individual will go through. Indeed, IPA is not concerned with providing theories or models in this way. This diagram simply illustrates the results of this study, highlighting its main themes and therefore providing a picture of the lived experience of traumatic bereavement for the present sample. Caution must therefore be exercised with regard to generalization of this illustration beyond the present study.



**Figure 5: Traumatic bereavement meaning-making model**

**Table 2: Being-towards-death following traumatic bereavement: ‘unheimlich’**

Physical	Social	Psychological	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of disembodiment</li> <li>• Stark awareness of mortality, finitude, fragility</li> <li>• Anxiety</li> <li>• Aches, pains, soreness</li> <li>• Changes in appetite, sleep patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existential isolation, alienation, estrangement</li> <li>• The need for support, connection</li> <li>• Being-towards-loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Profound shock including cognitive disruption and emotional numbing</li> <li>• Range of emotions including love, deep sadness, anger, guilt, responsibility, regret</li> <li>• Disintegration of self, existential death</li> <li>• Loss of identity, loss of selfhood</li> <li>• Loss of self-worth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collapse of meaning</li> <li>• Despair, depression</li> <li>• Meaninglessness, futility</li> </ul>

**Table 3: Reconstructing a meaningful life following traumatic bereavement: an authentic Being-towards-death**

Physical dimension	Social dimension	Psychological dimension	Spiritual dimension
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflected awareness upon of mortality, impermanence, finitude, fragility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being with others</li> <li>Being-towards-loss</li> <li>Movement between isolation and belonging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New identity emerges, integrity of self</li> <li>Develops new roles, responsibilities</li> <li>Improved self-worth, confidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New worldview or outlook, a developed spirituality, a system of meanings, values, beliefs</li> <li>Faces up to the human condition</li> <li>Exercises greater personal freedom/authorship, takes responsibility for creating a sense of meaning and purpose in life, making deliberate choices about how to live and one's actions in the world</li> </ul>

The above model, adapted from Park (2010) diagrammatically shows the journey that the traumatically bereaved individual is likely to take, based on the findings of the study. The diagram shows the way that sudden and unexpected loss challenges the individual's existing worldview including views about the self. This means there is a discrepancy between the view of the world as safe and the self as worthy (Janoff-Bulman, 1992), versus the traumatic bereavement which shatters these assumptions. This constitutes a loss of meaning, which throws the individual into an ontological mode of Being-towards-death characterized by a sense of 'unheimlich', or the feeling of being 'not-at-home-like'. This 'unheimlich' is experienced on all four dimensions of experience, as detailed in Table 2. The traumatically bereaved individual then experiences a need for meaning, grappling with it on the practical, spiritual, and relational levels. It is through this struggle that she is able to reconstruct a meaningful life, re-evaluating and identifying that which feels valuable and meaningful to her, and living according to these new priorities. This new worldview is understood by the present study as an authentic Being-towards-death.

This study aligns itself very closely with the findings of Paidoussis (2012). This is deemed highly significant not just given the dearth of existential-phenomenologically framed studies, but because such similarity suggests that common existential themes do exist when subjective experience is explored in depth. The present study also supports, not only current theoretical perspectives, but demonstrates the way that an existential-



phenomenological perspective can enrich our understanding of the phenomenon and improve clinical practice. It aligns itself with the clinical observations of existential practitioners and writers (see Barnett, 2009) and goes some way towards verifying these writings by adding to existing existential research, namely Paidoussis (2012).

# Implications for clinical practice

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This chapter aims to discuss the findings of the present study in terms of their implications for clinical practice in the counseling psychology milieu. It attempts to encapsulate, where appropriate, the 'essential values' of counseling psychology (Cooper, 2009) as outlined below:

- 1) Prioritisation of subjectivity and inter-subjective experience
- 2) Focus on facilitating growth and actualisation of potential (by ensuring findings are related to practice)
- 3) Orientation towards empowering clients
- 4) Commitment to democratic, non-hierarchical relationship
- 5) Appreciation of the client as unique
- 6) Understanding the client as socially and relationally embedded

Although framed by existential thought, the study remains open to current perspectives and clinical approaches with the intention of prioritizing the client's best interests over theoretical or philosophical allegiances. It is therefore the case that the suggestions made herein will not be based purely on existential thought and phenomenology. In recognition of the importance of properly integrating approaches, however, it is also important to acknowledge that it may not always be possible to fully integrate all aspects of life and human experience. Indeed, existential thought holds that life is full of paradox and contradiction. Therefore, this chapter offers

suggestions towards a therapeutic approach based on its findings, allowing for pluralism and the holding of mutually exclusive approaches over a water tight and fully integrated model for working with traumatic bereavement.

## **28 An existential-phenomenological approach to working with traumatic bereavement**

The findings of the study are thought to resonate very strongly with an existential phenomenological approach to practice. It is suggested that such an approach should look to explore, through description, the ontological and the ontic aspects of the individual's Being-in-the-world following traumatic bereavement, addressing the multitude of challenges faced on the four dimensions of existence.

Key aspects of an existential phenomenological approach might include:

- 1) Relationality: being-with the traumatically bereaved individual
- 2) Addressing the psychological and embodied response to traumatic bereavement
- 3) Working with a collapse of meaning; unheimlich, loss of self, and potential feelings of depression, despair, lack of purpose
- 4) Exploration of spirituality
- 5) Maintaining a continued relationship with the deceased
- 6) Reconstruction of a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement

It may be useful to refer to the existential phenomenological model of traumatic bereavement as outlined in Figure 5 in the discussion chapter. The model might assist practitioners in identifying what the present concerns of the client may be, as well as the areas to be addressed.

## **29 Relationality: ‘being-with’ the traumatically bereaved individual**

Given the relational aspect of traumatic bereavement and the emphasis on relationality in existential philosophy, the sense of existential isolation versus the need for human understanding which emerged from the findings provides an overarching theme for the proposed therapeutic approach.

The approach encourages the practitioner providing a ‘relational home’ (Stolorow, 2009) to the bereaved individual, where she can give expression to her emotional world and have these feelings ‘held’, integrated, and thus rendered more tolerable. ‘Dwelling’, as Stolorow (2015) describes the stance of the practitioner, is suggested as a manner of ‘being-with’ the pain of the bereaved individual, helping her to ‘bear the darkness rather than evade it’ (Stolorow in Frie & Coburn, 2010, pg.76). This resonates with Kierkegaard (1851), who writes that the secret to the art of helping the other is to first of all find him where he is, and then ‘be there’. It is this same principle which underlines the suggested therapeutic approach. It involves a ‘feeling-into’ or sensing the bereaved individual’s experience in an attempt to get as experience-close to it as possible, while acknowledging the

impossibility of ever understanding it fully. Such attunement and 'holding' of the emotional pain of that bereaved individual can allow her to stay connected to her experience, in the presence of the other, without the disruptions that are often experienced on the social dimension outside the therapeutic context. It is imperative therefore, that such a stance does not include attempts to offer solutions or comfort (which can interrupt the individual's process), but rather allows full expression of emotional pain. That is, practitioner *Fursorge* and the desire to 'leap in for the other' (Heidegger, 1927) should be avoided, as this would be viewed as robbing the bereaved individual of her openness to her dilemmas (van Deurzen-Smith, 1997). The practitioner should instead look to communicate willingness to 'be-with' the bereaved individual in a real way, whatever comes up.

Finlay (2008) can provide a way in to adopting such a manner of being. She (Finlay, 2008) argues that underpinning this manner of empathic 'being-with' is the adoption of Husserl's phenomenological attitude (Husserl, 1913) of wonder and openness, and a constant re-evaluation of what one knows. It may be helpful to make use of the hermeneutic circle and the knowledge that understanding will not be linear but rather nourished through a process of continually opening out and exploring. To do this, the practitioner must remain in contact with her own responses and at the same time remain open to and 'stay with' those of the other, in empathy. Such a degree of reflexivity would facilitate drawing on our own vulnerabilities, as Stolorow (2009)

suggests, in order to 'dwell' in the manner that he describes as necessary. 'Dwelling' or 'being-with' the traumatically bereaved individual is thus about entering and being attentive to her subjective world and in this way is as much a relational process as it is about the development of an intellectual conceptual understanding of the experience (Evans & Gilbert, 2005). Working with more than the cognitive, as the findings suggest is important, may involve the use of the linguistic relational not only in the form of description, but also poetry, metaphor, art or other expression, as means of clarifying, understanding, and being understood.

### **30 The collapse of meaning: 'unheimlich'**

The traumatically bereaved individual, thrown into a mode of Being-towards-death, experiences a sense of 'unheimlich', meaning that she feels 'not-at-home-like' (Heidegger, 1927) and experiences the world in a way that she had not previously experienced it. This will have an impact on all dimensions of experience, all of which should be addressed by an existential phenomenological approach to therapy.

#### **30.1 Working with a collapse of meaning at the practical level**

The bereaved individual, thrown into a new ontological mode of being (Being-towards-death), may experience a loss of meaning at the practical, spiritual, and relational levels. A loss of meaning at the practical level may be identifiable by the bereaved individual's sense of profound shock and an

inability to comprehend, at the cognitive level, what has happened. The traumatically bereaved individual may have difficulty grasping the reality of the loss, feeling that it was random, illogical, and literally unbelievable. Therapeutic work may involve assisting the individual to grasp the reality of the loss by encouraging phenomenological exploration of its lived experience. This may involve description and appreciation of what it is like to live without the deceased person on a day to day basis, and may also include processing the circumstances surrounding the death. For individuals who do not have the facts of the loss available to them, therapy might involve exploring what it is like to not have that information, including feelings of anger, uncertainty, and frustration that may arise (Pearlman et al., 2014).

### **30.2 Working with a collapse of meaning at the spiritual level**

In addition to a powerful embodied and psychological response, this new ontological mode of being is characterized by a loss of meaning at the spiritual level, which may manifest in despair, depression, loss of self, or lack of purpose. Despair, understood from an existential perspective as a problem of existence (Barnett, 2009) should be worked with phenomenologically. This means that although existing literature and the findings of this study both point to meaning-making as an important aspect of living with traumatic bereavement, the existential phenomenological practitioner must respect the bereaved individual's sense of meaninglessness in the world and attempt to understand what it means for

her, rather than attempting to impose meaning onto what is experienced as meaningless. It may be useful to explore and understand the way that the experience of traumatic bereavement might have drained the bereaved individual's sense of purpose, meaning, and vitality. There may need to be some additional pragmatic considerations in the case of the bereaved individual who is depressed and unable to engage in day to day activities, particularly where social support is less available and the individual has responsibilities such as caring for dependent surviving others. In such instances, it is worth considering the incorporation of cognitive behavioural experiments such as activity scheduling, albeit in a less structured way than cognitive behavioural therapy approaches.

The prominence of the spiritual dimension in the search for meaning following traumatic loss indicates that this will be a key area for therapeutic work, potentially underlying the whole therapeutic endeavour. This may take shape in the form of exploration of one's religious views or beliefs in an afterlife, where the development of a faith may be used as a potential resource, and the loss of faith as a secondary loss (Pearlman et al., 2014). It may include a more general exploration around the incorporation and rejection of values to live by, separating what the bereaved individual now feels is important in life from that which is not. In either case, an existential practitioner would offer no solutions to the dilemmas and questions which arise but would instead encourage and support these explorations,



facilitating the meaning-making process and what cognitive constructivists (Neimeyer, 2001; 2012) would call 'narrative repair'.

### **31 Addressing the psychological and embodied response to traumatic bereavement**

Traumatic bereavement was seen to have a significant psychological response, with participants describing a wide range of emotions including anger, guilt and responsibility, and regret. Positive emotional responses such as those elicited by love, admiration, and feeling supported were also present. An existential phenomenological approach would seek to work with these emotions phenomenologically, adopting 'epoche' and thus giving equal status to all emotions and attempting to understand them through description. Taking influence from Pearlman and colleagues' (2014) treatment approach and the Dual Process Model of traumatic bereavement, positive emotions may be used to engage the individual in restorative activities and provide necessary respite from the painful feelings of loss. Emotional responses (or lack thereof) would therefore not immediately be deemed pathological but would instead be considered on the basis of the particular individual and the context in which she finds herself. Of course, an existential phenomenological practitioner will need to exercise clinical judgment in discerning when turning away from the pain of grief is unhealthy. For instance, behaviours such as drug and alcohol misuse, overeating, or excessive shopping would constitute problematic coping

methods. More generally, Pearlman and colleagues (2014) suggest that turning away from grief is healthy so long as it is done on purpose for respite. It may also be helpful to know about any trauma in the individual's history and how she dealt with it, in order to have an understanding of her manner of confronting or turning away from life's challenges. The practitioner may then use this knowledge alongside observation and clinical judgement, to encourage confrontation of the loss or respite from its painful feelings.

From the standpoint of emotions being complex and intertwined, naming them may seem fixing, limiting, and simplistic. However, the same language with which we label emotions can also help to recognise their complexity. For this reason, it may be beneficial to help the bereaved individual to identify and name feelings such as anger and guilt in order to work with them. Where bereaved individuals find it difficult to work with and express certain feelings, metaphor, poetry, and art may provide a way in. This would encourage being-with the experience and the feeling, exploring, and accepting of it, as opposed to orienting to problem-solving. This would allow working at a deeper level than the factual meaning of the loss, which in my own experience of working with traumatic bereavement, is where transformative change takes place.

Given that it is from our bodies that we experience and understand the world, and given the powerful physical manifestations of traumatic bereavement, working with the individual's sense of embodiment will be a

key part of an existential phenomenological approach to therapy. However while a phenomenological approach may be beneficial here, but it may be necessary to adopt working in other ways to address trauma symptoms such as anxiety, flashbacks, and panic attacks. In these instances, breathing retraining techniques and visualizations may be helpful. However, regardless of how traumatic bereavement manifests, it will be crucially important, from an existential perspective, to address and understand these challenges by seeking to understand them within their context and not as isolated symptoms.

### **32 Maintaining a continued relationship with the deceased**

The importance of the nature of the relationship with the deceased prior to bereavement may be an important aspect of therapeutic work. It may involve reviewing what was good about the relationship, and what was not so good, working with whatever emerges. It is here that feelings of regret may arise. It may be important, as Pearlman and colleagues (2014) suggest, to distinguish feelings of regret from those of guilt, where regret pertains to aspects of the relationship or incidents which the bereaved wishes had not been, and guilt involves responsibility for the death. In such cases where there is a sense of unfinished business, it may be necessary

to consider, for instance, borrowing from Gestalt therapy approaches in the use of chair work or writing letters to the deceased.

The findings suggest that the bereaved individual, rather than breaking ties, will benefit from a continued relationship with the deceased. An existential phenomenological approach to working with traumatic bereavement - encouraging the reconstruction of a new life without forgetting the old - would not pathologize a continued bond with the deceased but would instead encourage it. In therapy, this may involve working with the bereaved individual to find ways of maintaining the bond, such as through the creation of memorials, listening to music which was enjoyed by the deceased, or engaging in activities which the deceased was previously involved in.

### **33 Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement**

The sense of 'unheimlich' evoked by traumatic bereavement may be recognized as the 'call to conscience' (Heidegger, 1927). The traumatically bereaved individual may have a sense of having had the rug pulled from under her feet, finding herself forced to confront life in a way she had not previously confronted it. She may become acutely aware of finitude, temporality, and the fragility of life, experiencing a sense of unease about herself and her safety in the world. An existential approach to therapy would explore these realisations and questions towards the creation or clarification of a new worldview. Included in this will likely involve exploring what it

means to be 'reconstructing a meaningful existence' and how one might go about doing this following traumatic bereavement.

### 33.1 Regaining a sense of self

In line with existential thought (eg. Sartre, 1943a) which states that experience is contingent upon the presence and absence of our relationships, the bereaved individual may be seen to be faced with deeply existential questions around her identity, questioning who she is, how to be, and how to be with others. Such disruptions of the personal dimension might manifest in a loss of self, including self-esteem, following traumatic bereavement. Such a loss of self/identity may be worked with as a secondary loss, pointing to the pervasiveness of traumatic loss.

An existential phenomenological approach to working with this would encourage reflexivity around any of the issues which may arise from a loss of self (eg. low self-worth, anger, self-hatred), and facilitate exploration and re-invention of self, morality, and purpose. A crucial part of the therapeutic endeavor will thus involve the bereaved individual becoming increasingly aware of where she is, how she got there, and how she might go on living. Such as in the case of the present study, this may involve such important life decisions as whether to have children, or changing one's career path.

The bereaved individual is also likely to have unmet practical and emotional needs as a result of traumatic loss which need to be addressed. It will be important for the practitioner both to 'stay with' the bereaved individual's

experience of not having her needs met, as well as exploring new ways of meeting them, such as by identifying others who can meet them, meeting them herself or learning to live without them being met (Rando, 2014). Through confronting these challenges, the individual may develop a new sense of self-worth, strength, and confidence.

### **33.1.1      Adopting new ways of Being-in-the-world**

Therapy is likely to at some stage involve working with the traumatically bereaved individual to find ways of re-engaging in life in a way that feels meaningful and purposeful. This may, as the findings suggest, involve working in the social services but is certainly not restricted to it. The existential phenomenological practitioner should remain open to all that emerges with the intention of finding out what is meaningful for each individual, and then working with that.

It is possible that adopting new ways of being will involve reinvesting or investing differently in relationships, and this may feel frightening for the traumatically bereaved individual. The realisation of the fragility of life and human finitude not only makes the bereaved individual aware of her own mortality, but also the mortality of others. This may mean that the bereaved individual will choose to invest more in her relationships with the appreciation that one day they will all end. Conversely, and particularly in the case of suicide or homicide, the bereaved individual may feel some

apprehension about investing in relationships. In this case, therapy might involve working with feelings of betrayal, hurt, and difficulty in trusting others. An existential-phenomenological approach would work phenomenologically with any of these issues, bearing in mind that Being-towards-death always includes a Being-towards-loss.

### **34 Summary**

An existential phenomenological practitioner should seek to assist the bereaved individual who has been thrown into a mode of Being-towards-death, in confronting and squaring up to suffering and the existential givens as part of the human condition. This will also include accepting the burdens of one's history and coming to terms with the painful realization that some things (eg. traumatic bereavement and aspects of that experience) are not changeable or resolvable, but that the individual can nevertheless choose how to respond to her facticity. She should thus be assisted in exploring what it means to be alive, and assisted in reevaluating her values and worldview. In doing this, an existential phenomenological approach would seek to assist the individual in making more deliberate choices and living a more meaningful, reflected upon life, exercising greater personal freedom within the limits of her situation and in response to the many vicissitudes of life.

# Critical reflections on the research process and findings

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## **35 Reflections on methodology and method**

I believe that my chosen methodology allowed me, as I had hoped, to gain insight into the richness of lived experience in a way that a quantitative study would not have. Using qualitative methodology meant that unexpected findings could emerge, and thus the research was not restricted by my knowledge and expectations. I feel that the use of IPA was particularly



appropriate in investigating lived experience, and allowed common existential themes to arise without losing sight of its idiosyncratic nature. Furthermore, its guidelines for analysis gave me a sense of security and confidence in carrying out the analysis with rigour and reflectivity. Yardley's (2000) guidelines were also valuable in ensuring this. The sample size used in the study has felt appropriate as it allowed the collection of a large amount of data (nearing 90 minutes for all interviews).

### **36 Reflections on the process of conducting the research**

I found the process of conducting this research very exciting and hugely challenging. At times I experienced periods of self-doubt, feeling unsure whether I would be able to successfully carry out what felt like such an important piece of work. At other times, simply staying motivated was difficult.

There were challenges at every stage of the process. With such a vast amount of literature on bereavement it was difficult at times to identify and choose the most relevant, important, and appropriate theories and perspectives to include in the literature review. At the start of each new stage of research, and indeed each step of analysis, I experienced a period of inertia resulting from feelings of uncertainty with how to proceed in unfamiliar territory. At these times during analysis, the guidelines set out by Smith (2011) felt invaluable.

I found the interview and analysis stages of the research process to be very challenging and emotionally heavy. Although I read and re-read the interviews several dozens of times over the course of conducting this research, I never stopped feeling moved by participants' narratives. Not only has insight into their experiences given me a better intellectual understanding of the topic, but it has also led me to become more deeply invested in and appreciative of its importance than I had at the start of the process.

### **37 Reflections on the findings of the study**

I feel that the study has elicited important findings in terms of identifying common existential themes in the experience of traumatic bereavement. While this was the goal of the study, I have seen more than ever how complex and multifaceted human experience is. It is indeed, as existential thinking asserts, full of paradox and diversity and this in turn has impacted the way that I practice as a counseling psychologist in training. Specifically, it has helped me to develop my ability to tolerate uncertainty, remain open to the phenomena, and resist the urge to reduce, categorize, or label in an attempt to know with certainty.

I feel that the findings of the study are relevant to current traumatic bereavement research, both in terms of supporting and challenging current perspectives. While there is much support for current dominant theoretical perspectives, I feel that the findings of this study offer much to think about

in terms of the current discourse around diagnosis and treatment. Specifically, the findings ask serious questions of the current emphasis on PTSD and MDD in the treatment of traumatic bereavement. The findings point to traumatic bereavement as a distinct phenomenon which calls for treatment which is distinct from that of PTSD and MDD.

My own experience of homicide resonated very strongly with the findings of the study. As previously mentioned, at the age of 19 a friend was killed by her sister's boyfriend. I experienced what I now understand to have been a collapse of world order. The world felt unsafe, unpredictable, and cruel. I could not understand how my friend, traumatically bereaved of her sister, would go on living, and I did not know how I could be of any assistance to her. My friends and I drew closer together that summer spending all of our time together, trying to make sense of what happened, and finding comfort in our shared experience. Having lost a close friend to suicide while carrying out this research, I found that aspects of this experience resonated strongly with those of the participants', particularly those who had been bereaved by suicide. I found myself utterly shocked and deeply saddened, trying to make sense of my friend's decision to end his life, and questioning how I might have prevented it. Honouring him through remembrances and charity work has been an important part of making the transition from loving him in presence to loving him in absence. Through the process of research, I recognized my own vulnerabilities and difficulties, and in this way learned about myself and to value relationships. The courage of the participants in

the study also made me more aware of the human capacity to endure and withstand tragedy.

While the process of such continual learning fuelled my interest in the research, it also called for careful attention to maintaining a balance between making assumptions and allowing my sense of familiarity to assist and enrich the process. Becoming familiar with traumatic bereavement literature, and through the interview and analysis stages of research, I found myself moving continually along the hermeneutic circle, always enriching my understanding of my own experiences and the topic in general. The more I understood, the more I had a sense of how important it is that a clinical perspective of traumatic bereavement must be broadened beyond that of symptomology and pathology to better understand its lived experience. I believe this would be invaluable to informing better clinical practice.

The relational aspect of traumatic bereavement emerging from the study also resonated strongly with my personal experience. Whether in response to war-related events or natural disaster a sense of community seemed to prevail in times of horror. The natural response seemed to be to find ways to be in solidarity and compassion with those affected. Such a response is not unique to Sri Lanka, but something which is witnessed time and time again all over the world. It points to the relationality of death and our connection in our common finitude (Stolorow, 2009). However, I have also noticed that the desire to support the traumatically bereaved, most often, in

my experience, came in the form of practical assistance and symbolic acts of solidarity. Where emotional support is concerned, people often feel ill-equipped and uncomfortable. The traumatically bereaved individual may even be avoided. Barnett (2009) argues that the need for therapeutic assistance following traumatic bereavement is likely due to the way that society shies away from death and grief. Death makes us uncomfortable. We don't know what to do with it. The present study highlighted disruptions of the social dimension which often resulted from the social ineptitude (or expectation thereof) of those who did not know how to 'be-with' the traumatically bereaved individual. My sense is that research and discourse that has driven the existing emphasis on PTSD and symptoms that need to be treated, has heightened this discomfort. Death has become something which must be dealt with only by mental health professionals. Such a perspective stands in opposition to the findings of this study which point to the crucial importance of human understanding: 'being-with' the other and providing a 'relational home'.

### **38 Recommendations for future research**

The depth of analysis and understanding afforded by the method of analysis and sample size also meant there was a corresponding lack of breath in terms of the applicability of the findings. The recommendation for future research is to attempt to verify the validity of the findings of the present study first with further qualitative research. Since there are limited

qualitative studies (eg. Paidoussis, 2012) that investigate the lived experience of traumatic bereavement from an existential perspective, it would be useful to conduct further such studies in order to refine and consolidate common existential themes before checking their applicability to the greater population. These themes can then be validated using larger heterogeneous samples in quantitative studies.

Adopting different methods of analysis to investigate certain aspects of the findings would also be welcomed. For example, Paidoussis (2012) adopted a descriptive phenomenological method with the intention of identifying common existential themes in the experience of traumatic bereavement, and the present study lends support to her findings. Future studies might consider, for instance, adopting narrative methods, given that a change in identity/sense of self was a key aspect of living with traumatic bereavement. Further recommendations for research also include investigation into the role of religion, spirituality in traumatic bereavement, and the way that the nature of the relationship to the deceased and the mode of death may impact the experience of traumatic bereavement.

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## 40 Appendices

### 40.1 Appendix 1: Request for ethical approval

Middlesex University, Psychology Department

#### REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

**Applicant (specify):** UG PG (Module: **DCPsych Thesis**) PhD STAFF      Date submitted:.....

**Research area (please circle):**

Clinical  
Forensic

Cognition + emotion  
Health

Developmental

Occupational  
exercise

Psychophysiological

Social

Sport +

Other: **Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy**

**Methodology:**

Empirical/experimental

Questionnaire-based

**Qualitative**

Other

**No study may proceed until this form has been signed by an authorised person indicating that ethical approval has been granted.** For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved.

This form should be accompanied by any other relevant materials (e.g. questionnaire to be employed, letters to participants/institutions, advertisements or recruiting materials,

information and debriefing sheet for participants<sup>1</sup>, consent form<sup>2</sup>, including approval by collaborating institutions).

- Is this the first submission of the proposed study?

**Yes**

- Is this an amended proposal (resubmission)?

**No**

***Psychology Office: if YES, please send this back to the original referee***

- Is this an urgent application? (To be answered by Staff/Supervisor only)<sup>1</sup>

**Yes**

here \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor to initial

Name(s) of investigator(s)

Aindri Jayasinghe

Name of supervisor(s)

Chloe Paidoussis, Rosemary Lodge

Title of study:

**Living with Traumatic Bereavement; an interpretative phenomenological analysis**

Results of Application:

**REVIEWER - please tick and provide comments in section 5:**

**APPROVED**

**APPROVED WITH AMENDMENTS**

**NOT APPROVED**

<sup>1</sup> see Guidelines on OasisPlus



**SECTION 1 (to be completed by all applicants)**

1. Please attach a brief description of the nature and purpose of the study, including details of the procedure to be employed. Identify the ethical issues involved, particularly in relation to the treatment/experiences of participants, session length, procedures, stimuli, responses, data collection, and the storage and reporting of data.

**SEE ATTACHED PROJECT PROPOSAL**

2. Could any of these procedures result in any adverse reactions?  
**YES/NO**

If “yes”, what precautionary steps are to be taken?  
**ATTACHED**

**SEE**

3. Will any form of deception be involved that raises ethical issues?

**NO**

*(Most studies in psychology involve mild deception insofar as participants are unaware of the experimental hypotheses being tested. Deception becomes unethical if participants are likely to feel angry, humiliated or otherwise distressed when the deception is revealed to them).*

Note: if this work uses existing records/archives and does not require participation per se, tick here .....

and go to question 10. (Ensure that your data handling complies with the Data Protection Act).

4. If participants other than Middlesex University students are to be involved, where do you intend to recruit them? (A full risk assessment must be conducted for any work undertaken off university premises)<sup>6,7</sup>

**Participants will be recruited using social networking sites such as Facebook, word of mouth, public notice boards, and via advertisements in local newspapers, The Psychologist, and NSPC.**

5a. Does the study involve

Clinical populations **NO**

Children (under 16 years) **NO**

Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders?

**NO**

5b. If the study involves any of the above, the researcher needs CRB (disclosure of criminal record)

-Staff and PG students are expected to have CRB – please tick **YES**

-UG students are advised that institutions may require them to have CRB – please confirm that you are aware of this by ticking here **N/A**

6. How, and from whom (e.g. from parents, from participants via signature) will informed consent be obtained? Informed consent will be obtained from participants.

**SEE ATTACHED CONSENT FORM**

7. Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time,

without penalty? (*see consent guidelines*<sup>2</sup>)

**YES**

8. Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?

**YES**

(*see debriefing guidelines*<sup>3</sup>)

9. Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?

**YES**

Participants will have my contact details in the event that they experience negative effects following the interview. While I will not provide therapeutic assistance, I can direct participants toward appropriate assistance if necessary.

If "no", how do you propose to deal with any potential problems?

10. Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will confidentiality be guaranteed? (*see confidentiality guidelines*<sup>5</sup>)

**YES**

If "yes" how will this be assured (*see*<sup>5</sup>)

The digital recordings and transcripts will be digitally encrypted and secure (in compliance with

the Data Protection Act 1998). No names or identifying characteristics will be published in the dissertation or any articles.

If "no", how will participants be warned? (*see*<sup>5</sup>)

(NB: You are not at liberty to publish material taken from your work with individuals without the

*prior agreement of those individuals).*

<p>Are there any ethical issues which concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form?</p> <p><b>NO</b></p> <p>If “yes” please specify:</p>
---

(NB: If “yes” has been responded to any of questions 2,3,5,11 or “no” to any of questions 7-10, a full explanation of the reason should be provided -- if necessary, on a separate sheet submitted with this form).

**SECTION 2 (to be completed by all applicants – please tick as appropriate)**

**YES NO**

12. Some or all of this research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University	<b>X</b>	
--	----------	--

If “yes” tick here to confirm that a Risk Assessment form has been submitted	<b>X</b>	
--	----------	--

13. I am aware that any modifications to the design or method of this proposal will require me to submit a new application for ethical approval	<b>X</b>	
---	----------	--

14. I am aware that I need to keep all the materials/documents relating to this study (e.g. consent forms, filled questionnaires, etc) until completion of my degree, publication (as advised)	<b>X</b>	
--	----------	--

15. I have read the British Psychological Society's <i>Ethical Principles for Conduct</i> <b>X</b>  <i>Research with Human participants</i> <sup>4</sup> and believe this proposal to conform with them		
---	--	--

**SECTION 3 (to be completed by academic staff -- for student approval, go to Section**

**4)**

Researcher..... date .....

**PSY OFFICE received**

Signatures of approval: Ethics Panel ..... date .....  
date:.....

(signed pending approval of Risk Assessment form) date:.....

If any of the following is required and not available when submitting this form, the Ethics Panel

Reviewer will need to see them once they are received and before the start of data collection –

please enclose with this form when they become available:

- letter of acceptance from other institution

- any other relevant document (e.g., ethical approval from other institution):\_\_\_\_\_

**PSY OFFICE received**

Required documents seen by Ethics Panel ..... date .....  
date:.....

**SECTION 4 (to be completed by student applicants and supervisors)**

Researcher (student signature) ..... date  
 .....

**CHECKLIST FOR SUPERVISOR – please tick as appropriate**

	YES	NO
1. Is the UG/PG module specified?		
2. If it is a resubmission, has this been specified and the original form enclosed here?		
3. Is the name(s) of student/researcher(s) specified?		
4. Is the name(s) of supervisor specified?		
5. Is the consent form attached?		
6. Are debriefing procedures specified? If appropriate, debriefing sheet enclosed – appropriate style?		
7. Is an information sheet for participants enclosed? appropriate style?		
8. Does the information sheet contain contact details for the researcher and supervisor?		
9. Is the information sheet sufficiently informative about the study?		

10. Has Section 2 been completed by the researcher on the ethics form?		
11. Any parts of the study to be conducted outside the university? If so a Risk Assessment form must be attached – Is it?		
12. Any parts of the study to be conducted on another institution's premises? If so a letter of acceptance by the institution must be obtained - Letters of acceptance by all external institutions are attached.		
13. Letter(s) of acceptance from external institutions have been requested and will be submitted to the PSY office ASAP.		
14. Has the student signed the form? If physical or electronic signatures are not available, an email endorsing the application must be attached.		
15. Is the proposal sufficiently informative about the study?		

**PSY OFFICE received**

Signatures of approval: Supervisor..... date .....  
date:.....

Ethics Panel ..... date .....  
date:.....

(signed pending approval of Risk Assessment form)  
date:.....

If any of the following is required and not available when submitting this form, the Ethics Panel Reviewer will need to see them once they are received – please enclose with this form when they become available:

- letter of acceptance from other institution

- any other relevant document (e.g., ethical approval from other institution):\_\_\_\_\_

**PSY OFFICE received**

Required documents seen by Ethics Panel ..... date .....  
 date:.....

**SECTION 5 (to be completed by the Psychology Ethics panel reviewers)**

	<b>Please Tick or Use NA</b>	<b>Recommendations/comments</b>
1. Is UG/PG module specified? (student appl.)		
2. If it is a resubmission, has this been specified and the original form enclosed here?		
3. Is the name(s) of student/ researcher(s) specified? If physical or electronic signatures are not available, has an email endorsing the application been attached?		
4. Is the name(s) of supervisor specified? (student appl.) If physical or electronic signatures are not available, has an email endorsing the application been attached?		
5. Is the consent form attached?		
6. Are debriefing procedures specified? If appropriate, is the debriefing sheet attached? Is this sufficiently informative?		
7. Is an information sheet for participants attached?		
8. Does the information sheet contain contact details for the researcher?		
9. Is the information sheet sufficiently informative about the study? Appropriate style?		



10. Has Section 2 (points 12-15) been ticked by the researcher on the ethics form?		
11. Any parts of the study to be conducted outside the university? If so a fully completed Risk Assessment form must be attached – is it?		
12. If any parts of the study are conducted on another institution/s premises, a letter of agreement by the institution/s must be produced. Are letter/s of acceptance by all external institution/s attached?		
13. Letter/s of acceptance by external institution/s has/have been requested.		
14. Has the applicant signed? If physical or electronic signatures are not available, an email endorsing the application must be attached.		
15. Is the proposal sufficiently informative about the study? any clarity issues?		
16. Is anyone likely to be disadvantaged or harmed?		
17. If deception or protracted testing are involved, do the benefits of the study outweigh these undesirable aspects?		
18. Any other comments?		

## REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

## **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**

### **Section 1: Question 1**

#### *Introduction*

This study is interested in the experience traumatic bereavement and the manner in which bereaved individuals cope and find meaning in the face of traumatic loss. Its overall aim is to gain a better understanding of the lived experience of traumatic bereavement. This is expected to have practical implications for clinicians working with traumatic bereavement. The study will be framed by bereavement and existential literature, as well as phenomenology.

#### *Methodology and Method*

Since the study is interested in exploring meaning, how people make sense of the world, and how they experience events, I have chosen to adopt a qualitative approach. More specifically, I will adopt the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, which is specifically committed to the examination of lived experience and how people make sense of major life experiences.

#### *Design*

This study will recruit 8-10 participants. Participants must be between 22 and 40 years of age at the time of taking the interviews, and will have been traumatically bereaved at least 2 years prior to this. This means participants will be 'young adults' (Erikson, 1959). The requirement for two years having elapsed since bereavement is in accordance with literature that asserts that individuals have generally 'recovered' from the major impact of loss by this time (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2012). Participants will also have received therapeutic assistance in the past to cope with their bereavement. This way I will be investigating the phenomenon in individuals who felt they needed therapeutic assistance, and from an ethical point of view will minimise harm since unexamined thoughts and feelings surrounding traumatic bereavement are less likely to surface. The relationship of the bereaved to the deceased will either be that of a close friend or family member.

#### *Data Collection and Stimuli*

I have chosen semi structured interviews for data collection, since they enable participants to offer rich, detailed, first person accounts of their experience. The questions asked will be the stimuli which will be unknown to the participant beforehand, although the information sheet would clearly have explained the subject matter beforehand. Interviews will last no longer than 90 minutes. The data will be anonymized prior to publication by the omission or change of names, locations or identifying details.

#### *Responses*

These will be the answers to the interview questions. A tape recording of the interview will be taken, with consent, the data transcribed verbatim, and analyzed thereafter.

### *Procedures*

The interviews will be conducted in a privately hired therapy room within a counselling centre, which is not only a secure building but will also have other people around.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The ethical considerations for this study have been closely measured against the guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2009). An application for NSPC and Middlesex University Ethics Approval will be submitted and research will begin once approval is given. There will be no deception involved in the study – participants will be given a written outline of the nature of the research and will be fully informed about its aims and objectives. Prior to interviews, these details and procedures will be re-explained before signing two voluntary participation consent forms. Participants will maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.

### *Confidentiality*

Participants will be fully informed about confidentiality and its limits, as stipulated by the Data Protection Act (1998). They will be informed that although quotes may be used in the write-up of the thesis or a journal article, all identifying information about them will be removed. They will be informed that supervisors and representatives from academic and professional bodies may look at the anonymised transcripts. Raw data will be stored on a password protected laptop and hard drive, plus a password protected internet location such as Dropbox.

Participants will be offered debrief at the end of each interview. During this debrief, I will check how my participant is, re-explain the intentions of the study and what will happen to the results of the data, and allow him/her to add anything which may feel relevant. I will provide my research supervisor's and my own contact details if they have any questions or concerns regarding their involvement in the study, plus contact numbers for CRUSE and the Samaritans, should they feel they need therapeutic assistance following the interviews.

Participants will be recruited using social networking sites such as Facebook, word of mouth, and via advertisements in local newspapers, The Psychologist, and NSPC.

### **References**

- British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2009). Retrieved from <http://www.bps.org.uk/what-we-do/ethics-standards/ethics-standards-on-16/12/12>
- Data Protection Act (1998) Retrieved from <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents> on 08/02/2013
- Royal College of Psychiatrists (2012). Retrieved from <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/problems/bereavement/bereavement.aspx> on 02/12/2012

**REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL**

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**

**Section 1: Question 2.**

Traumatic bereavement is a particularly sensitive topic, therefore all aspects of this study have been considered from the standpoint of its participants, with the aim of avoiding potential risks to psychological well-being, mental health, personal values, and dignity. Participants will be given information about topics to be covered in the interview, told that they can ask for a break at any time during the interview, have the right to not answer questions if they choose, and can withdraw from participation at any time.

However, the sensitive nature of the topic still presents the possibility of distress to participants. While they will be made aware of this possibility in the information sheet, and at the time of consenting, they may not accurately anticipate the extent to which the process may be emotionally challenging. To mitigate potential harm, I, the researcher, will conduct an assessment on risk to self (attached) at the time of considering participants, and before starting the interview. I will also check throughout the interview, by asking participants how they are managing, and offer the chance to withdraw at these times. Equally, they may alert me to their distress and request to stop if they wish. The interview will then be gently ended.

I will also conduct a debrief at the end of each interview, when I will check how my participant is, allow him/her to add anything which they may feel is relevant, re-explain the intentions of the study and what will happen to the results of the data. I will provide my contact details if they have any questions or concerns regarding their involvement in the study, contact numbers for CRUSE and the Samaritans, and details of the BPS website should they feel they need further assistance in managing distress following the interviews.

I believe that the process may offer some of the benefits of counselling since interviews will offer individuals an opportunity to reflect on their experience. Bowlby (1980) argues that if interviews are handled appropriately, participants are usually grateful for the opportunity to express their sorrow to an understanding person. As the interviews will be conducted by myself, a trainee counselling psychologist, I will bring to the process the counselling skills and experience I have developed over the course of my training. With these, I will be equipped to deal with participant distress responsibly, professionally and with sensitivity.

### **References**

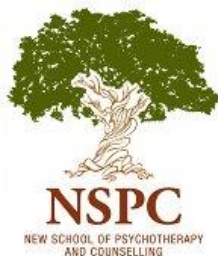
Bowlby, J. (1980a). Attachment and loss, Vol. 3: Loss, sadness and depression. New York: Basic Books.

## **40.2 Appendix 2: Ethical clearance**

### Conditions:

- Reformat the PIS and consent form headers
- Keep recordings 6 months after graduation, anonymous data can be stored as long as desired
- Debriefing form: focus on emotional distress and how that could be handled in the context of research studies

### **40.3 Appendix 3: Advertisement for participants**



## RESEARCH PROJECT: **CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS**



**RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY  
AINDRI JAYASINGHE  
(COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGIST IN TRAINING)**

This research is interested in exploring what it is like to live through the experience of traumatic bereavement. The term traumatic bereavement is used to refer to a loss which is sudden, unexpected, and possibly associated with horrific or frightening circumstances.

To participate in this study you will need to have lost a close friend, partner, or family member when you were a minimum age of 20. The study also requires that you experienced this loss at least two years ago, that you are currently a maximum age of 50, and that you have received some therapeutic assistance to help you cope with your loss.

If you fit the criteria and decide to take part in this study you will be asked to take a face to face interview with the researcher at a mutually convenient time between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March. If you are interested in learning more about taking part, please contact:

[traumaticbereavement@gmail.com](mailto:traumaticbereavement@gmail.com)

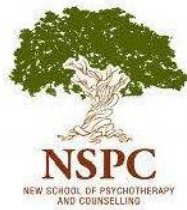
This research project has received full ethical approval from the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling, and the Middlesex University ethics panel. The research is supervised by:

Dr. Chloe Paidoussis ([chloe\\_paidoussis@hotmail.com](mailto:chloe_paidoussis@hotmail.com))

Dr. Rosemary Lodge ([rosemarynspc@gmail.com](mailto:rosemarynspc@gmail.com))

### **40.4 Appendix 4: Participant information sheet**





‘The Experience of Living Through Traumatic Bereavement: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis’  
conducted by  
Aindri Jayasinghe  
as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy  
from  
NSPC and Middlesex University

NSPC Ltd  
258 Belsize Road  
London NW6 4BT

Middlesex University  
The Burroughs  
London NW4 4BT

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

Dated:

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the research?

This study is being carried out as part of my studies at NSPC Ltd and Middlesex University.

The study is interested in understanding what it is like to live through traumatic bereavement. The term ‘traumatic bereavement’ is used to refer to a specific type of bereavement, wherein the loss is sudden and unexpected, and potentially associated with horrific or frightening circumstances.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you have replied to my advertisement for people who are aged from 22 to 50 years, and who were traumatically bereaved at least 2 years ago.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

Should you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to meet with me at a mutually convenient time and location, for an interview which will be approximately 60 minutes and will not exceed 90 minutes. Before beginning the interview, I will conduct a brief assessment with you to monitor and manage any risk in the event that you become distressed. There are

no wrong answers and you will be invited to speak as openly as you feel comfortable to. During the interview you will be asked to reflect on what it was like for you to be traumatically bereaved. A tape recording of the interview will be taken with your consent, and the data will be transcribed and analysed thereafter. A qualitative research method will be used to extract the main themes of what you and other participants tell me about your experience of traumatic bereavement.

Once the interview is complete you will be offered an opportunity to debrief during which time I will re-explain the intentions of the study and what will happen to the results of the data. I will then offer you the opportunity to add anything which you may feel is relevant. You

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

Traumatic bereavement is a particularly sensitive topic. Although measures will be taken to mitigate this, you may still find it distressing to talk about your experience. At regular intervals during the interview, I will ask you how you are managing and offer you the chance to withdraw from the study. I also invite you to alert me to your distress at any time, and if you wish, we will bring the interview to a gentle close.

If you have any further questions, you can contact me at:

Aindri Jayasinghe  
NSPC Ltd. 254-6 Belsize Road  
London NW6 4BT

[traumaticbereavement@gmail.com](mailto:traumaticbereavement@gmail.com)

## 40.5 Appendix 5: Consent form



**'Living With Traumatic Bereavement: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'**

conducted by

Aindri Jayasinghe

as a requirement for a Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy

from

NSPC Ltd. and Middlesex University

NSPC Ltd  
258 Belsize Road  
London NW6 4BT

Middlesex University  
The Burroughs  
London NW4 4BT

Supervisor: Chloe Paidoussis

**Written Informed Consent**

Dated:

I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.

I have been given contact details for the researcher in the participant information sheet.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and provide my consent that this might occur.

---

Print name

---

Sign Name

date: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the participants:** All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The NSPC research ethics sub-committee have approved this study. Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Social Sciences Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 40.6 Appendix 6: Risk assessment

##### Risk Assessment

Name:

Date:

- 1) Have you ever tried to harm yourself in any way, including through neglect?

YES/NO

If yes, when?

How far did you get?

Were emergency services involved?

- 2) Are you currently having thoughts about taking your life or hurting yourself in any way?

YES/NO

If yes, have you made any plans towards doing this?

- 3) Do you have children under the age of 18, in your care?

If so, please detail their name(s), and date(s) of birth below:

- 4) What has prevented you from harming yourself in the past?

- 5) Safety plan, in case of risk:

Participant Name: .....

Signature: .....

Researcher Name: .....

Signature: .....

## 40.7 Appendix 7: Sample transcript

1. Emergent Themes	Transcript	Exploratory Coding
2.	I: Ok so we're recording now. Erm, what I want to do first [name] is just going through the paper work. Erm, first of all the Participant Information sheet which you've already read	
3.	P: Yes	
4.	I: But, erm I'd quite like you to just have a look at it again	
5.	P: Sure	
6.	I: Just to make sure that there's any...	
7.	P: Yeah	



8.	I: ...everything's straight forward and you don't want to ask me anything. And then I'll look at one with you.	
9.	P: Yes	
10.	I: Are you happy to read it or shall I read it to you or?	
11.	P: I'm happy to read it...	
12.	I: Ok...	
13.	[silence while reading... looks up and hands paper back]	
14.	I: Ok?	
15.	P: Yeah	
16.	I: So just to pick out some of the main points, erm... in terms of what happens to this data	
17.	P: Yes	

18.	I: Erm, 6 months from the time of my graduation I'll erase these recordings, and then 5 years after my graduation I'll destroy even the transcripts and the consent forms which we're about to go through now	
19.	P: Ok	
20.	I: Erm in terms of other people seeing the transcripts only my supervisor would see them but they would be all anonymised so they wouldn't have a sense of who you were	
21.	P: Yeah... yeah	
22.	I: Erm, apart from that I think what I need to also let you know is there is a chance that the... this paper might be published. Erm, but you're able to sort of withdraw from	

	the study at any time, erm, even after we've taken the interview.	
23.	P: Yeah	
24.	I: So you can just write to me later and say 'I don't think I want to do this anymore' and you can withdraw with no negative consequences at all. Erm... you may have... because this is a very sensitive topic	
25.	P: Mm!	
26.	I: There is a chance that you will feel distressed while we talk about it. Erm, so just to stress... I will offer you breaks throughout but if I'm not offering you a break	
27.	P: Yeah	

28.	I: ...at the time when you'd like to have one then just let me know and that'll be fine	
29.	P: Ok	
30.	I: And also if you want to just bring the interview to, to a gentle close we can do that too. Erm, I'll also give you a list of contacts at the end when we do a debrief, that signpost you to places where you can get some therapeutic assistance should you feel it necessary. I know that you're in therapy at the moment but I will still give you...	
31.	P: ...Yeah	
32.	I: ...erm, a contact list anyway	
33.	P: Ok	

34.	I: Erm... I don't think that there's anything else that I really need to add. Erm, just to stress that, or just to let you know rather that... the interview is about 60 minutes but it may be less... it may be more. I won't hold you more than 90 though.	
35.	P: Yeah	
36.	I: It may feel like somewhat of a one-sided conversation. I don't have very many questions... I'm really just interested in hearing about your experience.	
37.	P: Yes	
38.	I: No real agenda there I just want you to talk as much or as little as you feel comfortable. Erm, but it may feel one sided	

39.	P: Mmm	
40.	I: Erm, I may ask you questions that feel like obvious questions but the reason I'm asking those is so that I make sure I'm not making any assumptions. Erm, so you might wonder why I'm asking you something that feels a bit ridiculous but it's just so that I... I know for sure that what I think might be your experience is that...	
41.	P: Yes	
42.	I: Erm... and I think, I think that's everything is there anything you want to ask me before we get going?	
43.	P: No. I dont think there is, and I, I won't hesitate to... if something occurs to me. I, I'm, at this moment in time I'm very relaxed about the data, and erm, experience	

44.	I: OK	
45.	P: Er... so we'll see, we'll see how it unfolds	
46.	I: Yeah...yeah ok	
47.	P: Yes, thank you	
48.	I: You can hang on to that actually [PIS]. But what we'll do we'll go through the consent now.	
49.	P: Yeah	
50.	I: Erm, so if you just... I'd like if you could read and sign both of them and then you can keep one copy and I'll keep the other... and there's a pen just there for you.	
51.	[silence while signing... hands over paper]	
52.	P: Thank you	

53.	I: Ok, thanks so you can keep one copy and I'll keep the other one	
54.	P: Yeah	
55.	I: Erm... so the other admin remaining is the sort of risk assessment which is procedural but it's also important just to make sure that we keep you safe and we manage any risk in case any risk does come up. Erm, so some of this may apply and some of it may not but we still do need to go through it.	
56.	P: Yeah	
57.	I: Erm, so... just answer as, as you see fit. Erm, have you ever tried to harm yourself in any way including through neglect?	



58.	P: No...	
59.	I: Ok	
60.	P: ...no I haven't	
61.	I: Are you currently having thoughts about hurting yourself in any way?	
62.	P: No	
63.	I: Do you have children under the age of 18 in your care?	
64.	P: No	
65.	I: Ok so... what I'll do is because of...because you've answered the way you have we won't draw up a safety plan other than to say that you'll have the contact sheet	

	in case your risk changes and then you'll sort of know where to go in case it does happen...	
66.	P: That's fine, yeah	
67.	[signing of Risk Form]	
68.	I: Ok... if you could just...	
69.	P: ...yes	
70.	I: ...write your name and sign as well. Ok, thank you. Alright. Do you feel ready to start?	
71.	P: I do. I do thanks, yeah	
72.	I: Ok so before we sort of go straight into it... erm, I really am so grateful for your, for your being here. It's really great that you are and I appreciate it	

73.	P: You're very welcome	
74.	I: [smile]... could you tell me a bit about what motivated you to take part?	
75.	P: Yeah sure, erm... as you know I'm a student on the DProf.	
76.	I: Mmm	
77.	P: And I recognise I'll be sat where you are in a few years time, and so there's a sense of 'we're all part of one big group', and I wanted to contribute to that.	
78.	I: Mm!	
79.	P: And there's also the erm... the more selfish reason of I want to gather some experience of what it's like, what it's like as an interviewee and I can maybe see a little bit	

	of what it's like as an interviewer. Er, so yeah I, I, I kind of, I'm not refusing any opportunity to learn a bit more.	
80.	I: OK	
81.	P: Yeah it's definitely all of those. And, and also as a third reason, erm... I said I'd get going, erm... yeah I... my Dad's death is 11 years ago this February	
82.	I: This month, yeah...	
83.	P: ...And I have thought about him a fair amount recently	
84.	I: Mmm	
85.	P: Erm... more than the last few years maybe. And that draws me to commit to something where I'm going to be exploring that in a particular environment. So that's attractive to me as well	

86.	I: Ok so you've been thinking about him more of late than the last few years?	
87.	P: Yeah... erm, you know one reason would be I've met someone who's important to me...	
88.	I: Mmhmm	
89. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as ongoing/forever</li> </ul>	P: ...and... whenever that's happened in the past, these 11 years, since Dad... you're very aware that Dad won't meet that person. If we're to go on to.... you know... family and so on	<p>Throughout his life when he meets someone new, he is aware that they won't meet his father</p> <p>Stops at 'since Dad...' implying some difficulty in using the word 'death'</p> <p>Loss is always there</p>
90.	I: Yeah	

91. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grief as ongoing/forever</li></ul>	P: So yeah that's... those feelings of er, sorrow and the sadness at not being able to change that	There is sadness that his partner won't meet his father. Sadness at not being able to change that  Loss is final and cannot be reversed
92.	I: Ok so it feels like a pertinent time to be thinking of him not just because of the month but because of what's happening in your life as well.	
93.	P: Yeah, I think so and I think I contacted you before I'd met erm... we'd be able to say I mean it was the 16th Dec when I met ah, Marie, and erm, so may have been before	
94.	I: Yeah	

95.	P: But... and I think I was thinking about him quite a bit before that and that does happen from time to time. I'm not quite sure what has motivated that before, this relationship but I think something has.	He had been thinking about his father quite a bit before meeting the person in his life  Grief takes figure or ground at different times, but it is always there
96.	I: Ok so there are times when it's, sort of, more present and other times when it sort of subsides and... it's a kind of ebb, ebb and flow.	
97.	P: Yes, yeah	
98.	I: Ok	
99.	P: And er, it was the ten year anniversary last year. Its er, 23rd of February, so... his death, and erm... yeah I mean that... and his father died in March	Ten year anniversary was last year

100.	I: Oh ok...	
101. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the fragility of life</li> <li>Awareness of death/finiteness</li> </ul>	P: ...erm, last year... so there's a few things that may have taken a while to maybe surface within me. Er, and I also... I meditate and, and last year I'd... I'd done a few things that led me to meditate a bit more on death and impermanence and fragility and yeah... dad comes up in that	There are things around his loss that have recently surfaced within him.  He has been meditating in general and meditating on death and impermanence and fragility and these themes are connected with the loss of his father
102.	I: Yeah... ok. Erm, could you, could you tell me a little about the loss in terms of ... I mean I know who you lost but the circumstances around it?	
103.	P: Yes it was it was my father, and erm... [sigh] it's worth saying I was extremely close to him. Erm, after his, his	Participant lost his father, who he was extremely close to. After his



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of relationship prior to death</li> <li>• Feelings of guilt and responsibility around the loss</li> <li>• Feelings of regret associated with loss</li> </ul>	<p>death me and my middle brother... I have, I have two older brothers... wrote down the roles he played for us, you know in our lives and... we got to 17 major headings, you know er... mental and that, that kind of thing... and certainly best friend for me. Erm, and somebody who certainly loved unconditionally and, and lived through us in many ways. Erm, perhaps to too great an extent... erm, he, he sacrificed himself hugely in providing for us and then when we were in our 20s making sure we had what we needed and erm, to, to the neglect of himself I wou... I would say and... that was part of his psychology as I, as I see it. Coming out of his own situation. Erm, and I, I think that was partly my belief is that that was partly responsible for his death the way he, the way he denied himself certain things, and...</p>	<p>death he and his brothers thought about the role their father had played and came up with 17 major headings, indicating how important he was in their lives. He was a very dedicated father and one who sacrificed a lot to look after his family and his children. Participant sees this as partly responsible for his death.</p> <p>Some sense of responsibility/guilt for the death</p>
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	I think staying with the family and deciding to be that kind of father	
104.	I: Mmmhmm	
105. Feeling associated with loss: feelings of regret	P: ...and very much present, was part of what didn't allow himself the nourishment which may have allowed him to live a bit longer and I'll explain that bit with the circumstances of his death...	He may have lived longer if he had not sacrificed his own wellbeing  Sense of regret
106.	I: Sure	
107.	P: ...so it was a, it was a heart attack	
108.	I: OK	
109.	P: I forget the technical term of what actually... erm, an infarction I think is the term. The point is nobody knew it was coming, I really don't think <i>he</i> did	Sudden heart attack, nobody, not even his father would have had any clue that it would happen

110.	I: Mmm	
111.	P: Erm, we found in his diary afterwards something we didn't ever tell mom but we found erm, we found a couple of appointments for the heart specialist and we also found a set of numbers which we... I do a lot of sports and I recognise them as pulse, you know pulse readings, you know, and blood pressure readings as well at certain times. So there was something...	There is some indication that his father was aware of a potential heart problem because he had pulse and blood pressure readings in his diary
112.	I: Mmmm he was aware of something	
113. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of meaninglessness/absurdity in the loss</li> </ul>	P: ...something... erm, and he had, he had been on medication for high blood pressure. I'm not sure if he was at the time I, I, I can't recall. Erm... and, so, yes... and he was, he'd just been out for a run. Erm, so it... he	He had been very happy in the days before, pointing to the absurdity of what happened and how quickly life can change. He had been out for a

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of understanding what happened in the process of sense-making/moving through grief</li> </ul>	<p>jogged... and he'd been very happy the few days before and... certainly as mom would describe it [slight laughter]. Erm, but he had just been for a run and Mom heard him counting and you know she didn't ever understand what that was erm, until you know we stand there thinking he's probably just checking his pulse... you know... and it would have been that. From what she, from what she described. So... yeah, and, he... yeah he hit the ground dead, as we were told by the ambulance men, you know</p>	<p>run and suddenly dropped to the floor and died. He died on the spot.</p> <p>An importance in understanding the details of what happened in the moments prior to the loss</p>
114.	I: So really, really sudden	
<p>115.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of understanding what happened in the process of</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah they said, the doctor had said he, he hit his head... and he had a cut, but it hadn't bled. Which, I don't know the doctor said that means he was, his heart had stopped, which makes some sense. Erm, so I</p>	<p>He died at that very moment and the participant's mother found him on the floor. This was traumatic for her.</p>

sense-making/moving through grief	suspect he didn't know a great deal about it, erm... and mom, mom heard the thud and she found him and..  ...obviously it was... it was very traumatic for her. Erm, so that's er, that's the sort of, the, the, the real small detail around...	Participant has tried to understand what happened
116.	I: ...around what happened yeah	
117.	P: ...for me...	
118.	I: Yeah	
119.	I was, I was abroad, I was in [country]. And Dad died on the Sunday afternoon. I was found on the Thursday, contacted on the Thursday... so little bit of time afterwards	Participant found out some days after his father died because he had been on holiday
120.	P: Yeah	

121.	<p>I: Erm... and... in not overly pleasant circumstances so... we were out in a place called [name], out on the coast, and... when I'm on holiday or out travelling I don't like to, people to know where I am [laughs], because that's, that's kind of the point. But I... my friend who they knew I was with got me email from his dad, saying that the West Country police... mom and dad were down in [county] at the time... were looking for me. And I was to phone home, so... I can remember really clearly the. .. I was in the shower and it was one of those holidays that had already been, I hadn't felt very comfortable in the country</p>	<p>Participant was on holiday and remembers very clearly when he was tracked down through a friend he was with. He wasn't very comfortable in the country where they were and he remembers vividly being in the shower [just before hearing the news]</p> <p>Some aspects of the experience are very clear</p>
122.	I: Oh ok...	
123.	<p>P: ...for a number of reasons... just cruelty to animals and incredible chauvinism as I, as I saw it</p>	

124.	I: Mmm	
125.	P: I hadn't wanted to go there and so I wasn't feeling particularly great, on the holiday	He had not wanted to go there and was not feeling very good there
126.	I: Ok... ok	
127.	P: Erm... and I can remember the, the jolt of being told that I... a very, very good friend of mine... the message and his, his countenance was... he was just really serious. Like he said, before he said anything he said... I've got something, to tell you... I could just tell, I could just tell it was something really important	When his friend told him that he had news for him, he knew immediately that it was something very important. He could see it on his friend's face and there was a sense of 'knowing'
128.	I: You had a sense that he knew?	
129.	P: I... I knew he knew something was very serious	
130.	I: Ok...	

131.	<p>P: And, and... I came out and sat on the bed in my towel and I said erm, this could be a life changer. I remember very, very clearly. So I borrowed one of the lads we were with mobile and called home. Pretty, pretty much straight away as soon as I'd got some clothes on you know... And my sister in law answered, the home phone in [county] and... erm, she's never there. She has erm, she had very bad post natal depression and, and... irritable bowel and she doesn't travel, and she was down there in [county].. they live in [city] so that wasn't.. I thought th... I thought both mom and dad had died, that was my presumption.</p>	<p>He remembers sitting on the bed to hear the news and thinking to himself that what he was about to hear could be life changing. He has very clear memory of those moments. He assumed both of his parents had died because an unlikely family member answered the phone</p> <p>Traumatic loss as life changing</p>
132.	I: Ok	
133.	P: My presumption so...	



134.	I: So you were thinking that it was... some, someone that passed away	
135.	P: Yes... yeah I had in, I had in my head a road traffic accident.	
136.	I: Ok	
137. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeking a continued relationship with the lost one: meaning found in honouring the lost one</li> <li>Amnesia following realisation of loss</li> </ul>	P: I did, and erm... so she said, anyway she said... 'oh [participant name] love... 'or something to that effect, I remember it very... sort of soft. And put my mom on, so I knew mom was alive and then she said... erm... she said 'it's your dad... he's had a heart attack'... And I said, almost interrupting 'but he'll be ok, won't he?' and she said 'No, erm, he's gone'... and... and... I can't remember what happened after that on the call. Erm, I don't suppose it was very long after that... and erm, one thing I always remember which is a perhaps, very much	As soon as his mother told him that his father had had a heart attack, he immediately sought reassurance that he would be ok. Once he was told that his father had died, he is unsure about how the rest of the conversation went. The news was met with horror. Recalls his second

	<p>a peripheral detail but I'd been thinking, a few years before that I wanted tattoo...and my, my second thought, after coming off the phone, apart from the horror of it... was 'I know what my tattoo is going to be [laughter]'. Which I, I found, erm, funny how the mind works. And I... I had the tattoo</p>	<p>thought being about the tattoo he would get to honour his father</p> <p>Amnesia</p> <p>Importance of honouring lost one</p> <p>Seeking continued relationship with the lost one</p>
138.	I: Yeah that's interesting it's almost a way of sort of keeping him forever	
139.	P: Yeah and at the time it seemed really appropriate.	
140.	I: Yeah	
<p>141.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeking a continued relationship with the lost</li> </ul>	<p>P: And... so just... down on my stomach and it's, it's a Chinese symbol for 'Dad' and it's very private... nobody knows what it means unless I tell them and.. yeah... at</p>	<p>The tattoo is private but it is nice to explain to people its meaning and talk of his father.</p>

one: meaning found in honouring the lost one	the time it seemed, it seemed really appropriate. Erm... and yeah it's nice cos people ask and I can say... I can mention him	Honouring the lost one is important, talking about him and doing something in his name
142.	I: Yeah, yeah... that is nice. I'm hearing just how sudden it was and that...	
143.	P: Yes	
144.	I: ...to the extent that there's... even a blur around what happened in those moments.	
145.	P: Yeah	
146.	I: I wonder if you're able to describe what was going on for you in terms of sort of a response... as much as you can remember...	
147.	I: Yeah	

<p>148.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memory is disjointed/not consistent following loss</li> </ul>	<p>P: Erm... yeah some of it's a blur, some of it's really clear. It's, it's kind of one or the other</p>	<p>Some aspects are difficult to remember and some are very vivid memories</p> <p>Memory is disjointed/not consistent</p>
<p>149.</p>	<p>I: So a part of that experience is that it was quite blurry, I suppose?</p>	
<p>150.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of utter shock following traumatic loss</li> <li>Numbing associated with shock as self-preserving</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yes, er, but as I say something of it is like real 20-20 stuff and... so I, I, I clearly remember walking back into the sort of the backpackers place... the guys were sort of keeping an eye on me and I was on the phone I think and they were then there, there was three other lads... they, they stepped in and I'd got to get home and erm,</p>	<p>Some memories are very clear. He recalls clearly that his friends were keeping an eye on him while he was on the phone. There was a feeling of being stunned</p>

	they started discussing how that would be... and... and erm... so you also, my thoughts were very much I think tha... I think I was stunned...	
151.	I: Mmm	
152. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on practicalities assisting in the moving through grief initially</li></ul>	P: ...and then progressively I kicked into the mode of 'I need to do something, I need to get somewhere. And I had a task... er, to focus on and I would focus on that until it was done, and then, I'd deal with something...	And from stunned he went into thinking about the practicalities of getting back home. This provided a focus and kept him from having the full response of grief until he got home
153.	I: So the immediate thing was the practical side of 'I need to get home...'	
154.	P: Yeah... yeah and that was very easy in that sort of situation because I did need to get home, and... so we	Remembers travelling to get home and the drive was unpleasant but he

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on practicalities assisting in moving through the initial period</li> </ul>	<p>hired a car and we went over the mountains back to [location] and er... through the night... er, kind of the only car in the village it felt like, and the guy was pretty much drunk and it was... it was, it was a pretty hairy drive. And I watched some comedy on the radio</p>	<p>watched comedy on the radio. It was easy to hold off the reaction because he had getting home to focus on</p> <p>Postponing the full impact of grief to deal with practicalities</p>
155.	I: Mmm	
<p>156.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss being met with a sense of the full grief response being held off</li> </ul>	<p>P: From my, on the ipod...err, laughing. You know... erm... but very aware of the holding back... of whatever my experience was going to be</p>	<p>Recalls laughing while listening to the comedy show and being aware of the grief response being held off</p> <p>Anticipation of grief</p>
157.	I: So there is something about putting it on pause until you were able to... till you could actually... take on the...	

158.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss being met with a sense of its full response being held off</li> </ul>	<p>P: It's that... I didn't want to... let the, the tidal wave over me until I was somewhere, where...well not there!</p> <p>Basically, I mean... and not with something to do... and...</p>	<p>Grief likened to a tidal wave which was to go over him. He could not allow that to happen until he had reached home</p> <p>Grief as a wave that takes over</p>
159.		<p>I: So it was like you were trying to... you were sort of postponing it...</p>	
160.		<p>P: Yes... absolutely and, and, and that becomes more relevant when I tell you how I dealt with my, my grief.</p>	<p>He was postponing his grief</p>
161.		<p>I: Ok</p>	

162.	P: Erm... cos I think that pausing... that suspending... set in motion a... my way of dealing with the death of my, my father.	The way that he was postponing his grief in these initial days set in motion his manner of grieving for his father thereafter  Process of grief
163.	I: Ok	
164.	P: Erm, and I, I get to that quite quickly but let me tell you how I got home because it's important as far as...	
165.	I: Yeah, sure...	
166.	P: ... the practical suspension was, was all happening and so [airline] were great in terms of moving flights	
167.	I: Mmm	



<p>168.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships with others are enriched</li> </ul>	<p>P: We stayed in a hotel in [location] just for a few hours and then [name] one of the guys, who I'm very close with, far more now than I was then</p>	<p>He stayed overnight at a hotel with one of his friends, who he subsequently became much closer to.</p> <p>Loss has an effect on relationships: enriching</p>
<p>169.</p>	<p>I: Mmm</p>	
<p>170.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li> </ul>	<p>P: Flew back with me... er... the other two were gonna follow on the next flight and... I really appreciated the solidarity of 'well if you're going, we're going' and er... And he... [name] ...the guy that flew back with me... he erm, he's somebody who doesn't really talk very much</p>	<p>His friends returned to the UK with him and this felt like support and solidarity which he very much appreciated. He was aware of the friend who travelled with him having nervous energy and talking a lot</p>

	and I remember him... he did not stop talking. So he was kind of complicit in the suspension...	
171.	I: Ok...	
172.	P: You know... it wasn't about... he was keeping me active...	
173.	I: So...	
174.	P: To keep me thinking about the minutae of the dinner or the breakfast we had or... whatever it was...	Friend was complicit in keeping him from thinking about the reality of the situation
175.	I: Mmm	
176.	P: And a bit of guys humour, I seem to remember, you know, in terms of, this is fun isn't it?	

177.	I: There was a sense of people trying to hold you... in a way?	
178.	P: Yes... yes there was	
179.	I: Ok	
180. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li> </ul>	P: And particularly [name]... I don't know the other guys [names]... I don't think they quite knew where to place themselves and when I got back to London and I was just filling a bag in my flat... erm, my housemate came in and she really shouldn't have done... she should have been at work and I told her and she, she'd met my dad and she just did not know what... to do... or say or anything and... I... I recognised that and really stepped in for her and let her off that hook, if you like. Because...	<p>He felt held by his friends. There was a sense of his house mate not being able to handle seeing him and did not know what to do or say.</p> <p>He 'let her off the hook' indicating that he was let down or could have been upset with her in some way</p>
181.	I: You were feeling that you had to put her at ease?	

182.	P: Yeah... and I...	
183.	I: In a way looking after her?	
184. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li> </ul>	P: In a way... and also... I was allowing us both not to go there...	<p>He did not want her to talk about his father's death because he was not ready to confront it. She had not been complicit in helping him to hold off his response</p> <p>A need to hold off grief</p>
185.	I: Ok! So this is still that...	
186.	P: I still... oh yeah very much...	
187.	I: Still in that mode of.... Ok	

188.	P: So I've got to get myself to [county] and I'm in my flat in London	
189.	I: Ok so you're not home yet...	
190. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical assistance experienced as positive support</li> </ul>	P: Now... I was working at, for an American law firm at the time and I'd only been there 6 months and... erm, it's a very hard place to work, and... erm, did me quite a lot of emotional damage in many ways. Some of which I'll talk about because it's relevant for the bereavement bit... but they put... they gave me a car from the airport to wait for me and then... back to the... Paddington station for the train. Erm, and sorted out my train fare and so on and they did a really good job and they'd also helped the police find me... by going through my emails and seeing who, who I was with...	He was newly working at a law firm which he found to be a difficult place to work. Feels it did him emotional damage. However in the beginning they facilitated his travel to his parents place and helped the police to locate him on holiday

191.	I: Ok... that's how they found...	
192. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical assistance experienced as positive support</li> <li>• Grief as relational</li> <li>• Turning away from the pain of grief</li> <li>• Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>• Disruption of the physical world: feeling separate from the immediate environment</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... they'd been... kind of... really amazing about it actually. Compared to how they normally were [laughs]... so .... There's also... I was being... I was being supported. I was. Erm, from not necessarily places I would expect. So then [sigh]... the train... back to [county]... and... I can't remember much about that journey, I really can't... I can remember arriving. Erm, yeah I, this is speculation in a way but I, I suspect I can't remember because I wasn't allowing myself, you know, to absorb information, erm... and then... when I got to [name of station] it was my... got off the train and my mom and my elder brother were there and I, I sobbed. I sobbed and mom sobbed. Erm, I think we probably all did.	<p>The law firm where he worked had been very helpful and supportive at the beginning. He does not remember the journey to the county and feels this is because he was purposely not absorbing information. When he saw his mother and older brother he finally sobbed.</p> <p>Grief finding a 'relational home' with safe people. Grief is interpersonal.</p> <p>Importance of significant others in grieving</p>

193.	I: It was something about... you allowed yourself...	
194. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as relational</li> <li>Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>Importance of significant other(s) in the grieving process: family</li> <li>Grief as an uncontrollable force</li> </ul>	P: Yes... yes. I couldn't help it at that point. The two things are entwined aren't they? But yeah, it, it, it was ok ... it was ok then...	He could not hold it in once he saw his family. He was finally in a place where it was okay to allow it.  Grief needing a relational home  Importance of significant others
195.	I: Ok	
196.	P: Or at least it... it did burst through. Erm, but my, you know that... that wasn't.... I didn't cry much	Even though he had eventually cried, it was not much
197.	I: Mm	

198.	P: Erm, and because the funeral had been postponed until I'd been found... it was then very quick, once I got back. I can't remember what day, I think it was the Monday. So dad had died on Sunday so it was 8 days. And I got back on the Friday...	The funeral had been postponed until his arrival
199.	I: Right	
200.	P: ....sort of erm... yeah it would have been, I guess it was light at the station so it must have been before 6 o'clock. It was, it was late February so ... but it can't have been much earlier cos I, I had to get back, obviously. Erm... yes so I was kind of thrown, thrown into it...	
201.	I: Mmm	



202.	P: Er... and... sort of slightly difficult to, to not look at this from the back. From the end of, well from where I am looking, backwards	
203.	I: Yeah that's ok...	
204. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grieving as idiosyncratic</li> </ul>	P: How er, how I mourned Dad... was, wasn't... there's no right way but it wasn't the best way for me. I er...	<p>He feels he did not grieve in the best way for himself</p> <p>The importance of grieving freely</p>
205.	I: Ok... how come?	
206. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for the wellbeing of others who were bereaved</li> </ul>	P: I... Mom was... just... torn apart by it. She had, she had had a very strong father figure and then marriage straight from home er, with her parents of.... A very strong man you know and... so in terms of what he took of the emotional burden of the unit	<p>His mother was torn apart by the grief.</p> <p>Participant was very aware of the wellbeing of his mother</p>

207.	I: How you describe your father sounds...	
208.	P: Yeah	
209.	I: ...a bit similar to how you describe your Moms father	
210. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for the wellbeing of others who were bereaved</li> <li>Looking after others affecting one's process</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... yeah... that's fair. Yes. Erm... and I took on the mantle and my other brothers did... my brothers did to some degree but I was single at the time... they were both... one was engaged and one was married so I had more time. Erm, and emotional space maybe. I took on the mantle of, of kind of filling that vacuum that Dad had left Mom. And I'm not sure I regret it but what it did was it meant I was looking. I was kind of suffering vicariously on Mom's behalf and not really looking at myself and what I needed.	When his father died he assumed the role of his father in relation to his mother. He took that role because he was single and was able to. He doesn't regret it but is aware of how it denied him of his experience because he was concerned with hers.

211.	I: Ok so where was... what ha... where was all that stuff that was going on for you?	
212.	P: Erm... I don't know where it was...	
213.	I: It was just...?	
214. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as all-encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	P: Yeah it wasn't getting attention and I... I think I only had a week off work and I was back in work and... might have been two I don't think it was. Erm, and I was all at sea, I really was, I was erm... I can remember just that feeling of my, my brain swimming in its own kind of... floating in its own kind of juices really. I was very demotivated.	He wasn't able to pay attention to, or tend to his own experience. He found himself going back to work almost immediately. He was not ready for it and felt very demotivated  '..brain was swimming in its own kind of juices' indicating that he was unable to focus or do anything productive at work

215.	I: That's really powerful, your brain floating in its own juices. Can you sort of ... just describe a little bit more what was going on?	
216. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the physical world: a sense of not being in-sync with the surroundings</li> </ul>	P: Yeah just erm... I was behind what was happening. I was... in terms of reaction times almost	He felt as though he had not caught up with what was happening. There is a sense of not being connected with the world
217.	I: Ok... ok...	
218. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embodiment: the feeling of being outside one's body</li> </ul>	P: Life seemed to be erm, like a TV show that I was in and I wasn't.... It wasn't really computing erm, I felt very estranged from my experience and almost erm, yeah	Disruption in experience  A feeling of being 'estranged' from his experience, indicating a difficulty

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: being estranged from one's own experience</li> </ul>	<p>catching up. Like a bit like when I came in tonight but times a hundred.</p>	<p>in making sense of it or being connected with it</p> <p>Numbness/shock</p>
219.	I: Yeah	
220.	<p>P: And... yeah in terms of the motivation to engage with, particularly with work... the experience of being at work</p>	<p>Being at work was very difficult.</p>
221.	I: Mhmm	
<p>222.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as all encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	<p>P: I... why would I? I couldn't engage with that. And erm, erm... can't remember. Can't remember to what extent I thought, I thought about Dad but I really struggled. To the point of having to say I... I'm struggling at work and... they were, having been great, were really quite poor then, er...</p>	<p>'why would I' indicating work would naturally not be a priority during this time</p> <p>Found it very difficult to engage with work to the extent that he had to</p>

		<p> speak to his work about it but they  were not supportive at this time </p>
223.	<p> I: Ok... so they weren't really able to extend that support when you were on the ground in the office and you became aware of that? </p>	
224. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imposed time-frame for grief as unhelpful</li> <li>Concern for others who were bereaved</li> </ul>	<p> P: Yeah it was business as usual very quickly... it may have been 3 weeks or a month, I don't know, but it was... things needed doing. Er, and erm, you know one of the partners who had lost his Dad at a similar age took me out to a coffee one time which, I really... straight, almost straight away once I got back which I really appreciated. It was an experience he found, he found difficult. I was erm, I was... allowing mom to phone me whenever she wanted to, which when you're starting </p>	<p> There was a lack of care from workplace and an expectation that things could go back to normal very quickly. Went for coffee with someone who had a similar experience and this was appreciated. He looking after his mother to the extent that he would take all calls from her, which proved </p>

	<p>a legal career and you're trying to focus on that it was...</p> <p>it was probably a really bad thing for me but... erm,</p> <p>because it would just completely interrupt me</p> <p>emotionally, spiritually... and, and of course physically in</p> <p>the middle of a day. I worked hard I think. I tried to work</p> <p>hard, at least I was there a lot. Erm, and that wa... again</p> <p>that was still a suspension of...</p>	<p>difficult in a new job. Engaging with</p> <p>these calls and his mother's distress</p> <p>was a spiritual, emotional, physical</p> <p>disruption.</p> <p>Concern for others</p>
225.	I: Yeah there's still a sense of you not really... in its entirety confronting what had happened	
226.	P: Right...	
227.	I: Is that accurate?	
228.	P: Yes, it is, it is...	

229.	I: Sort of holding your mom and being sort of responsible for her... being at work but not quite being able to engage with what's happening	
230.	P: Yeah	
231.	I: And this general sense of being in the world but somewhat... a few steps behind	
232. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of the physical world: a sense of not being in-sync with the world</li> <li>• Grief as all-encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... yeah... you see that feeling portrayed in films... when somebody's had... a hand grenades gone off near them and there's... like in Saving Private Ryan somebody's just completely discombobulated and can see the small sensor working but the mind just isn't getting traction on what needs to be done and what's going on	There is a sense of not being able to engage with the world at the pace at which it is moving, behind somewhat behind at all times. Seeing but being unable to engage properly. Some disconnect between self and the world



233.	I: So you were aware of yourself being and acting in the world but you weren't sort of really engaged...	
234. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as an ongoing process</li> </ul>	P: Emotionally I certainly wasn't, I certainly wasn't... And that continued for quite a long time. In, in fact in a sense it may sense may still be continuing.	He was not engaging emotionally with his grief and questions whether that is still the case  Questioning of self  Trying to understand experience  The feeling that there is still more grieving to do
235.	I: Ok... so it still may be continuing... can you say...	
236. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as physical</li> </ul>	P: Well I have erm, yeah... at times of distress, particularly emotional distress I experience something that I call, it's like emotional lock down and I really	Participant finds that he is very emotionally distressed, there is some 'lock down' which prevents

	struggle with it. It's erm, I have an incredibly physical reaction so adrenalin, heart pumping...	him from having the full experience.  However there is a very physical response of heart racing and increased adrenalin  Grief is physical
237.	I: ...Ok	
238. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grief as physical</li></ul>	P: ... so I sleep badly, erm... and things like erm, my digestion... I won't be hungry, my bowels are, kind of loose... it's a real fight or flight kind of...	Sleep is affected, digestion, hunger, bowels, all affected. He has a strong physical response
239.	I: So during this time you had a real sort of physical response as well?	
240. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Grief as disabling</li></ul>	P: Yes, as I remember it. And it's something that became very ordinary for me and I had it before Dad. I see Dad's death as exaggerating tendencies that were	He always had this type of response to emotional stress but it was magnified following the loss of his

	already there but this was like the biggest impact I can imagine besides me losing my legs or something... really directly to me.	father. Loss of his father is only second to the loss of a limb
241.	I: Mmm	
242. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of the personal world: loss of awareness of self</li> <li>• Disjointed memory following loss</li> </ul>	P: Erm, and I... I lose the clarity on what I actually did in those months afterwards. Erm, which says something in itself.	Difficulty remembering the first few months  Amnesia following loss  Disruption of personal world: loss of awareness of self
243.	I: Yeah...	
244.	I: Actually... erm...	

245.	I: Actually can you put into words what you feel that says about your experience?	
246.	P: Yeah erm... it's like the train journey down to [county] to the air... from London to see Mom for the first time	
247.	I: Yeah	
248. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the physical world: not taking in the surroundings</li> </ul>	P: Erm, I mean that's... it's a very scenic journey and I would have thought there would be some contrast for me that recognised in that here I am, I've done this journey a lot, and I'm now doing it for these reasons. I'd have thought that would really stick in my mind. It would have been day light... I would have seen the views, but there's... there's nothing there and I had to change at one station and get a more local train before I met my	He remembers little of details around that time such as the train journey to his parents' house. There is a part of this which remains not understood in that he still has an expectation that it would have stood out to him. The only thing he remembers is the moment when he saw them  Shock prevents the full feeling

	Mom and brother. I can't remember any events. Only... seeing them	Separation from the world
249.	I: Ok... and how long would you... how long do you think that stayed with you? This general sort of sense that you're describing.	
250.	P: Well... erm, in one sense it's stayed for sort of 6 or 7 years... in one sense	In some respects he had this feeling for as long as 6 or 7 years
251.	I: Mmm	
252. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: not connected with self</li> </ul>	P: In that... it wouldn't have been the sole factor but I was in a life at that time... you know the US law firm was a big part of that world where I wasn't happy and I didn't know who I was and I was making choices which weren't good ones for me. Because I was, as I see it now looking back... emotionally, erm... well incredibly	He was leading a different type of life then, which placed emphasis on gaining emotional stability externally, through salary, fitness, hobbies and a job that held a certain status.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with loss in a similar way to other difficult feelings</li> </ul>	<p>insecure. Er, and... hurt, I imagine. Erm, and so I, I surrounded myself with erm... things that I thought had value in that... like... a big pay cheque, I kept myself incredibly fit... Erm... yeah the status of the legal career. Erm, like... hobbies like sailing and skiing and... you know...</p>	<p>External locus of security. Some distance from self.</p> <p>Seeking security externally</p>
253.	I: Yeah	
<p>254.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: not connected with self</li> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	<p>P: Bought my apartment and, you know I really see it as a shell. I was, I was kind of building and... but I was profoundly dissatisfied, as I, as I learnt, because I wasn't listening to my emotional life at all...</p>	<p>He was building a life that allowed him to keep distant from his emotional world</p>
255.	I: And you think that this was a result of the loss that you experienced?	

<p>256.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manner of grieving as personal</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah... er... it's not the only thing and you know in my therapy I've traced the decisions I was making back to another traumatic experience from my time in secondary school and I won't go into that too far but I'd... I'd been a real golden boy and from there I was in this... in [city] Grammar, a huge school erm... and I'm the smallest, I don't know anything, everyone's been to prep school. And I had... again as I see it, I had learnt to associate particularly my mother's love with my goldenness. Yeah, and I really, really struggled. And I started making choices around pretending I was ok. But stifling my emotional experience and getting on with the job which is exactly what I was doing after Dad. I mean you really can... if you extrapolate it they're straight lines [laughter]. It's how it feels and it's how I see it</p>	<p>From an early age he began to set aside his emotional needs to please his mother and associated his success with her love. This was extended into his manner of grieving in that he stifled his emotional experience following the loss of his father.</p> <p>Grieving is an extension of one's general manner of coping</p>
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257.	I: Wow, right ok... so there is something about neglecting what was going on from... from <i>this</i> time when you lost your dad but also from before when you were really quite a young boy.	
258.	P: Yes, yes... and then afterwards as well. And it's been - jumping around a little but - in the last 5 years since I left that law firm...	
259.	I: Mmhmm	
260. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The manner of grieving as personal</li></ul>	P: ... has been me gradually learning how to rebuild the connection with my emotional experience and I still don't find it easy... I find it easy where everything is going my way, but... at times of pressure, emotional pressure... the... you know this incredibly powerful reaction which, it's a steam roller. You know, it's very difficult to do anything to slow it. What I can do is hold it once it's here	He chose to leave the law firm five years ago, when he began trying to reconnect with himself emotionally. He is able to do this when things are going well but in times of emotional pressure it is much more difficult



	and allow it to pass. But that's, that's... not... that's not ideal.	'steam roller' indicating how powerful and unstoppable this feels  An inability to feel fully at the emotional level was something that existed before the loss too
261.	I: Mm	
262.	P: And I hope I'll get to the point where it doesn't bother me anymore but at the moment...	
263.	I: ... but it still... it still remains a challenge?	
264.	P: Mmhmm... it does, yeah I mean I, with this girl, erm, I've met... it's been very emotional... it's been wonderful and I haven't met anyone on that... I've felt like that about for 6 or 7 years. And erm, if ever, actually and... you know... the first bit of adversity we came across	This difficult with connecting emotionally in times of distress is experienced in other areas of his life such as in romantic relationships.

	<p>after sort of 7 or 8 weeks erm, I was terrified of it because my body was looking, or my psyche, whatever, was looking for signs of imperfection the whole time in order to make sure it was perfect and that I was certain about her and as soon as something happened where 'oh well that's something we need to overcome'... erm... my body reacted as though... really as though 'oh god.. erm... this is imperfect'. And there was a real sort of lock down before, I feel I almost can't feel at that point, is how it feels</p>	
265.	I: Ok... so sort of numbness?	
266.	<p>P: Yeah it is sort of feels like that but the feelings are there, it's almost like... I have a blind spot which increases to... so I can't see the emotions but if its experienced, I've experienced it in therapy where my</p>	<p>There is a sense of the feeling being there but not being allowed to be felt or looked at or stayed with</p>

	current therapist has said 'ok let's just, if you will, let's just see what is there'	
267.	I: Mmm!	
268.	P: And the thing is... I can feel it	When he turns his attention to it he is able to feel what is there
269.	I: Can't?	
270.	P: CAN... yes, I CAN	
271.	I: Ok...	
272.	P: It's just my mind has to be led to it... in order to see it. And... see past that blind spot.	His mind needs to be led to it, to see the blind spot and notice what is there

273.	I: So something about bringing the attention back to yourself?	
274.	P: Yeah	
275.	I: Because I think you were describing something before about abandoning yourself in a way, in these situations and...	
276.	P: A fleeing, yeah	He feels he flees from his emotional experience
277.	I: Yeah, like a fleeing, and, and... that... that numbness you can make sense of it if you pay attention to it	
278.	P: Yes	
279.	I: So there is feeling in there, it's just a matter of really...	

280.	P: Right... and it's not numbness... the numbness is the refusing to see it. It's the refusing to engage.	The feelings are there
281.	I: But actually there's a lot there?	
282.	P: Yes it's all there	
283.	I: Ok	
284. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disruption of the personal world: feeling disconnected from one's experience</li></ul>	P: But I'm also terrified of it which is why, why I also have this reaction. And of course it self-fulfils itself... it fuels itself because... if you dislocate from your experience that is frightening cos you can't, you can't judge things and you don't know quite where you are and... something traumatic is happening cos most of the time I'm living perfectly well with my emotional life and I've come to really rely on what I'm hearing and suddenly it's taken away from you and I can't feel for this	Dislocating from his experience distances him further and further from it. He becomes less able to judge his experience or where he is with it. In times of emotional distress he doubts himself and is unable to feel anymore, leading him to feel broken. Loss of his father was very

	<p>girl, in this case. That's terri... for me that's frightening.</p> <p>Erm, because I feel, erm, broken in a sense or I fear I'm broken. And I fear I'll never be rid of it, which then fuels the fire of the... the cycle so... and, yeah... so going back you know I think about what happened with the loss of my, my dad... I can't see how that couldn't be part of my journey you know, to, to that... to that feeling I've just described and that reaction and not just a part of it but a very big piece of that.</p>	<p>much characterized by this feeling of being disconnected.</p> <p>Disruption of the personal world</p>
285.	I: Uhuh...	
286.	<p>P: And... exploration of... erm... yeah... what emotional pain means to me. Why I then choose to... flee, you know or do whatever I'm doing.</p>	<p>He is interested in why he flees from emotional pain</p>

287.	I: Ok so there's a connection there between what was going on with your experience of your dad passing away and that sort of emotional sense of feeling	
288.	P: Yeah, yeah... that's... you know I can only, I can only summarise really you know... but that is how I see it	
289.	I: That's how it feels?	
290.	P: It feels right to me and I... I don't throw that around you know. Erm, and I've, obviously I've lived my life and erm... for me to say that feels like, feels right as in it's very big part of that, I take this meaning it is. Erm, yeah...	
291.	I: So that sort of ... that sense of that immediate response in a way is, you say stayed with you for 6 to 7 years...and well I just... I'm wondering what it's like for	

	you to tell me now cos you're sort of retelling it and I wonder what that's like...	
292.	P: Erm... yeah... there's um, there's two things that spring straight to mind. The first is I came into the room with a little bit of the numbness we're talking about because of my ... well it's because of my romantic situation right now... I... there is concern that it's not going as I want it to so I'm carrying that...	He began the interview with an emotional numbness owing to his current romantic situation
293.	I: So you're in that place that you sort of just described?	
294.	P: Yes	
295.	I: Ok	
296. • Grief as ongoing	P: And so... how do I feel about now retelling my, the tale of my Dad's death erm... there's a numbness. There's a numbness, and... at the same time I've felt	Feels some numbness in talking about his father but also some relief



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tuning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	<p>relief. Erm... yes there's a general numbness but I felt relief at certain times at certain parts of the story and erm. And helping myself understand some of why I am feeling like I am now has brought a sense of relief.</p>	<p>when there are moments of understanding his experience</p> <p>It is important to feel and to understand the experience</p> <p>Understanding of self</p>
297.	I: Ok so something about... making sense of it right this moment is allowing you to connect with it?	
298.	P: Hmm... yes.	
299.	I: Ok so, so there's still a sort of a, a fleeing but also an engaging which is going on	
300.	P: Yeah	
301.	I: As you're in this room at the moment	

302.	P: And very much in my life, around this room, yeah yeah.. because I have this reaction.. erm, and as I said the reaction feeds on the reaction.	
303.	I: Mm	
304.	P: So... and what I used to do is I used to bolt down that road, you know I used to go down there very, very quickly and before you knew it I was extremely far away from my experience and I wouldn't deal with that probably for a few months until there was a bout of depression or something similar	He used to flee into this place of disconnection very quickly, leaving him very far from his experience, which would continue for a number of months until he would start to feel depressed
305.	I: Mmhmm	
306.	P: And then I worked through that and I've... at some point it would lift. I've learnt that's not the best thing for me, so... I'm trying... I try now with mixed success to not	When he reaches this low point he would then begin to work through it and with awareness he is better able

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater/ongoing self-understanding following loss</li> </ul>	<p>panic and not feed it. And allow myself to relax as soon as... it's a bit like the contraction of a muscle, just allow it to... open up again and then you get the opposite cycle and you get the positive feeling and 'oh I am ok'... and hope floods in and I get energised by that. In the past it's felt a bit like I... a little bit like I imagine a bipolar person would feel in that I... really swing and it can be quite quick between the two. Now I try not to react to the, that feeling of uplifting and just take it as part of this, this process I go through</p>	<p>to slow down the process and thus not further it. By relaxing and allowing himself to notice the experience, hope floods in. Feelings on either end of this are quite extreme and as happening quickly, and is likened to experience of bipolar. Awareness helps him not to react as much.</p> <p>Greater self awareness</p>
307.	I: So by staying with it...	
308.	P: I try to...	

309.	I: It sort of changes the process?	
310.	P: Yes, yes it does	
311.	I: Ok... and... you sort of touched on this in some ways but ... what in this time did you find consoling, if anything?	
312.	P: Back, when my Dad died?	
313.	I: Yeah	
314.	P: Well I know I buried myself in looking out for my mom's interests and erm... you know I would be the one who told her that she was being angry or told her that she couldn't talk to my brother like that because it was pushing him away and she really needed to see his daughter... at that time that was something that gave her a lot of joy... so I'd be very much the parent. And,	Looking out for his mother was a distraction in that it kept him from his own experience, but it wasn't comforting, as such.

	with, with... a parent who hasn't been that great for me I don't think, you know... so that's that's been difficult... so it wasn't that wasn't consolation	
315.	I: Yeah	
316.	P: But it was erm... it was a distraction. And how could you say, how could one say that wasn't a good thing to help your mother out when she's bereaved. It's an easy one to defy	It was not that it was a bad thing to do, but it distracted him from his experience.
317.	I: So there's a bit of a dilemma there as well because it's not something that you... I think you said earlier that you don't regret it but it wasn't the best thing for...	
318.	P: Yeah it certainly wasn't the best thing for me and I don't regret it in that all my experiences brought me to here and I am kind of proud of myself. Erm, and I don't	Distraction by looking after his mother was not the best thing for him but he does not regret it

	<p>know whether I... I could have saved mom's life, I don't know... I don't know... er, if I had my time again which is slightly different than regretting, if I had my time again I would do it differently.</p>	<p>because through the experience he has come to where he is and he is pleased and proud with that. He doesn't regret how he was but would do it differently given the chance.</p>
319.	I: Ok, and how would you do it?	
320.	<p>P: Erm, I'd really look out for me, a lot more and it might mean I didn't look out... I might look out for mom the same amount but I would do it in a different way. I was so accessible for her...</p>	<p>He would do things differently by looking out for himself more. He wouldn't be less available to his mother but he would do it in a different way.</p>
321.	I: Ok so what, what...	
322.	P: And mom's quite needy... you know... anyway... so...	

323.	I: Oh ok...	
324.	P: She took a lot... she took a lot.	
325.	I: So, so... what, what might that have looked like in terms of... so I can get a sense of what you needed...	
326. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needing to be open about all aspects of experience</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... erm... well I would have needed to, to not look so strong all the time. Erm,	<p>If he could do it differently, he would allow himself not to look so strong all the time. He would allow himself to feel his feelings properly and this is viewed as a 'better' way of grieving, for him</p> <p>It is important to experience grief fully/grieve fully</p> <p>Be open about one's experience</p>

327.	I: Ok	
328. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	P: [slight pause]... yeah somebody to recognise that I wasn't as strong as I portrayed myself to be and acted how it was for me. And erm, I was, at that time I would have, I would have been very poor at allowing somebody behind the veneer of me being all concrete.	<p>He was not honest with his experience and would not have allowed anyone to see the veneer of being concrete</p> <p>'Concrete' indicating a lack of humanness and softness.</p> <p>'Veneer' indicating that the façade was thin, and just beneath is a very different experience</p>
329.	I: So you, so you were quite defended at the time?	
330.	P: Yeah massively	



331.	I: ...but in hindsight you would have been quite open to someone recognising that?	
332.	P: With hindsight...	
333.	I: Right, but not at the time.	
334. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	P: I don't think so and I wou... I was... you know you said that... you said defended. I was defended against myself as well. So I wasn't letting myself see my own weaknesses. So what chance does somebody else get to penetrate that... very, very difficult for them and...	He was distanced from his own experience and from himself, not looking at his weaknesses, making it impossible to another person to get to the real experience
335.	I: Ok...	
336.	P: ...I would have had a whole strategy of keeping people away. Cos I... I see it in others now and I recognise myself in others as I was... yeah... cos I'm, I'm bright and I'm sensitive and... yeah I was clever with	He would hold people at a distance to prevent them from entering into

	how I constructed my existence you know and what was around me, I really did.	<p>the side of himself that he was turning away from</p> <p>Turning away from aspects of self/experience</p> <p>Bad faith or inauthenticity</p>
337.	I: Ok...	
338. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of support from partner/family in the experience of grief</li> </ul>	P: And at the same time the people who would have been able to step into that potentially were in the same situation as me you know... I was single so there wasn't a romantic partner and mom wasn't allowing me... you know... and my brothers were fighting their own battles	<p>The people who might have been able to enter into that space were having their own experience of being bereaved, and he didn't have a romantic partner so there was not</p>

		<p>anyone else who could get close enough to see behind the veneer</p> <p>People identified as being close were immediate family and a partner, if there had been one</p> <p>Importance of partner/family/significant others in the process of grieving</p> <p>Importance of being open about experience with self and others</p>
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339.	I: So in that situation you became the person who was doing the looking after at the expense of yourself in a way	
340. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of concern for others who were bereaved</li> <li>• Seeking a spiritual connection following loss</li> <li>• Change of worldview following loss</li> </ul>	P: Yes, with mom for sure... and she had a hell of a year... mean she... we had a Labrador who died that year as well... which was very much... represented Dad for all of us but particularly mom because they were inseparable. You know... and, and then Mom got shingles as well... very badly... erm... there was just... yeah I remember I didn't believe in God at the time but I remember just saying 'Please God... leave her alone'. I remember that, very, very clearly... She was battered. She was absolutely battered. We were brought up with a real sense of duty and erm... you know, you look after your parents and your parents do a great job for you.	<p>Deep sense of love and care for his mother. Also a deep sense of duty, which has changed now.</p> <p>Some engagement with the spiritual dimension in seeking God</p> <p>Change in worldview</p>

	That was very much in the household and... so erm, I don't actually think like that so much now.	
341.	I: Mm	
342.	P: I certainly did then... yeah so I, I ... I did everything I could and I used to drive. I bought a car er, a nice flash car... some of it was retail therapy but the excuse for it was to get down to mom and I did	<p>He bought a car to facilitate getting to his mother to spend time with her.</p> <p>Looking after others</p> <p>Concern for others</p>
343.	I: Ok, still very much in that mode.	
344. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfort in shared experience</li> </ul>	P: Yeah. And we rotated, us three boys rotated in our visits to mom so that she got, you know we all got... we each went out kind of every third week or it might have	<p>The brothers took it in turns to see their mother but this meant that they didn't get to see each other. Seeing each other would have been positive</p>

	been every fourth. Erm, and so we didn't really see each other. That was one problem.	Support or comfort in shared experience
345.	I: Ok	
346. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort in shared experience</li> <li>• Importance of family in providing support</li> </ul>	P: That's one thing we've all said we'd changed cos...  we needed one another	He and his brothers feel they needed to spend time together more during that time  Support or comfort in shared experience  Importance of support from partner/family
347.	I: Yeah	

348.	P: We were sharing our experience as near as anyone was	Their experience was seen to be as close as one could get to understanding how the other felt
349.	I: Yeah and I guess... this is something you touched on but there's a mixed feeling around what it was like to be around other people. Can you talk to me about that?	
350.	P: Yeah I... two memories that were just coming back to me before you said that	
351.	I: Sure...	
352.	P: Which are relevant... erm... I went... I have a very close university crowd and... sort of ten of us.... And erm... and we went out for a night that had been organised, which we did at the time it was like a... we'd all go out and gather from around the country and... I	He met with very close friends from university for a gathering about a month after his father's death.

	don't know how long after dad's death this one was but it was like a month or something...	
353.	I: Ok...	
354. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of the personal world: losing awareness of self</li> <li>• Awareness of the effect of grief on others</li> </ul>	P: And I remember saying afterwards what a rubbish night it had been and people weren't entering into spirit. And somebody said to me that... 'Oh we were all really worried about you'... so I don't know how I'd been acting. But the point I guess I'm trying to make is... everyone else was aware of it but I wasn't... I was trying to, I was trying to be business as usual.	<p>He remembers feeling it wasn't a good night out and when he expressed this, he was told that the others had been worried for him. This drew his attention to the way that he had not been aware of himself in some way, but that those around him were.</p> <p>Others could see what he couldn't</p> <p>Disruption of the personal world, not aware of himself</p>



355.	I: So in fact that... that I think... when I said the defending and you said defending against yourself, it wasn't... it was actually quite transparent? People could see that you weren't ok?	
356.	P: Yeah maybe... maybe... yeah... I had... that wouldn't surprise me no, knowing what I know now	
357.	I: Ok, do you have a sense of what it was like, I mean there's some... from what I'm hearing there's times when you felt supported... when you were travelling back and making arrangements.	
358.	P: Yeah, yeah... immediately I was, yeah	

359.	I: And then there's other times I'm hearing something about being very sort of... detached or separate from...	
360. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li></ul>	P: Yeah... well with all bereavement I think, the people who are closest to the death, it stays with them a long time. But people who are close to people who are close to the death, even though they may think about it after a month or two, people forget the quality of what death actually does to people	Others who are not as closely affected to the loss move on much quicker, leaving those who are bereaved behind  Existential isolation
361.	I: Hmm	
362. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feelings of isolation in the experience of loss</li><li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li></ul>	P: And so... yeah, you, you, you go a few months past and the world seems like it never happened.	After a few months the world has appeared to move on

363.	I: And as you mentioned as an example was your work place	
364.	P: Yeah... you feel destroyed erm...	He felt destroyed  'You' perhaps to distance himself from his experience
365.	I: So, and I suppose you have... you said you were postponing the feeling so... I wonder whether at some point you started to feel it and people have stopped thinking about it?	
366.	P: Yeah, yeah... and... I guess by postponing I was trying to banish it	
367.	I: Banish it...	

368.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah it wasn't like 'oh I'll feel about this later'... I think it probably was when I was coming back but after the funeral you know, it, it was, it was my way of dealing with it. It wasn't... you know... it wasn't 'oh I'll deal with this in the Autumn' or something...</p>	<p>Turning away from the full experience was not a conscious decision but something seemed to happen on its own</p>
369.		<p>I: Yeah</p>	
370.		<p>P: But yeah you're right... erm... I don't know when it quite came out I was very depressed at the end of that year</p>	
371.		<p>I: Oh...</p>	
372.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to depression</li> </ul>	<p>P: Very depressed and just... you know disinterested. Erm, and it was the, the year that England won the rugby world cup and I really like rugby. I can remember,</p>	<p>This turning away from his experience eventually lead to depression</p>

	I was watching with family and I can remember not being...	Lack of feeling, vitality
373.	I: Hmm	
374.  Greater/ongoing understanding of self-following loss	P: ...not being interested and... I was right in the middle of, of a... my... what I think was my first proper depression. I had a couple after then and... I haven't had one for years because I've learned to change some of my way of being.	This was his first episode of depression. He has had further episodes but not for some years since he has changed some of his ways of being  Self understanding, transformation, post traumatic growth
375.	I: Ok	
376.  • Feelings of despair following loss	P: Yeah... yeah. Erm.... And it was actually, it was actually work that gave me the confidence to get out of that depression actually. Erm, cos I'd become very	He had become depressed and isolated, felt grey

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li> </ul>	<p>isolated and... going through the motions of life. Erm, looking back to that period it just felt very grey</p>	<p>Existential isolation</p> <p>Despair</p>
377.	I: Mm	
378.	<p>P: Coming into that Winter I found really difficult and... somebody at work who generally was the... it was a boss... it wasn't good for me but... he threw me something that was difficult to deal with and... I raised to it. I don't know quite why I did but I, I did, and er... it got me moving in a different direction and I gained some confidence and I think I enjoyed... I enjoyed the fact that I was able to do something</p>	<p>Re-engaging in a difficult project at work and being successful at it was helpful. Felt enjoyment at this feeling of being able to do something.</p> <p>Moving out of depression as he re-engaged with life and experienced enjoyment/pleasure</p>
379.	I: And you were enjoying again?	

380.	P: Yeah there were some things... so the energy kind of started to flow a little bit. I mean I wouldn't have been rubbing my hands with glee going 'I've got more work to do' but it was... I was alive.	Re-engaging made him feel alive again  Meaning in being productive, achieving, re-engaging
381.	I: Ok, yeah	
382.	P: I think...	
383.	I: ...You were feeling...	
384.	P: I guess I was...	
385.	I: Or maybe not?	
386.	P: No, I guess I was, because erm... I think that's what I... what I associate with the energy beginning to flow again and being alive. It was something was happening.	

387.	I: Ok...	
388.	P: Erm... yeah...	
389.	I: Ok... I wonder how you were enabled to sort of accommodate that pain... I wonder whether this is something about sort of pushing it off and that was the way you accommodated it? Or tried to banish it rather?	
390.	P: Is it possible to explain that again?	
391.	I: Yeah, sure... I suppose I'm wondering how you managed to get through each day with this feeling that you're describing of really being quite depressed? And yet still managing to accommodate that pain and on some level move through that grief	



392.	P: Yeah... I don't know, is the short answer. But I think, it would have been about that... the blind spot I was talking about	The pain was in the blank spot
393.	I: Ok...	
394. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as physical</li> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	P: Yeah, it would have been blanking out the pain. And yes the pain is still there and it's still hurting me but it's not hurting me directly. It's flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like I would have had erm... physically I would have aches, I would have slept badly, I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin. Erm, very shallow experience in terms of erm... yeah there's, there's no depth on my view of life. Yeah engagement with it so if I went out for night out, for example, it would have been... yeah, not memorable. Not really lived.	When he was turned away from the pain it was still there. It was there but he wasn't meeting it. It manifested physically in the form of aches, adrenalin, poor sleep.  He was not present in what he was doing, not fully experiencing anything that he did. There was a sense of no really 'living'  Grief as physical

		Turning away – inauthentic, bad faith
395.	I: You... said something about saying a quick prayer for your mom.	
396.	P: Yes	
397.	I: What role, if any, did your religious and spiritual beliefs play in this experience?	
398. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to an enriched spiritual world</li> </ul>	P: Erm.... Well I was agnostic before. Brought up Christian but I had found my own way to agnosticism and... erm... spiritually I deadened but it I, I think... and so... I'd already made choices that had led me towards protecting myself emotionally, spiritually from reality. My	He was brought up a Christian and found his way to agnosticism. He experienced not only an emotional block but also a spiritual, seeing them as connected with one another.

	<p>own experience, let's put it that way. Erm, and then we talked about my emotional life around my dad... the spirituality was also blocked off by that. The reason I say that with some confidence is, in my almost, rebuilding myself... in the last few, four five years, when I've accessed my spiritual.... my emotional life, my spiritual life has been there with it, so they kind of almost come as a pair. For me.</p>	<p>In the building back of his life and the reconnection with his emotional life over the past few years, there has been a rebuilding of his spiritual world.</p> <p>There is growth following loss</p> <p>Spiritual life blocked and then grows after loss</p>
399.	I: Ok	
<p>400.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	<p>P: Erm... and you know it's almost like erm, and I'm not the first to say this but the emotions are the, almost the discussion between the spiritual and the physical in a way. Emotion is almost the way of communicating</p>	<p>He understands his emotions as a conversation between the physical and the spiritual worlds.</p>

	<p>between the two. Erm, and I... yeah... for those at least those 6 years from my dad's death to me starting to turn the corner back to having a relationship with my emotions, a conscious one... erm, yeah it was, I didn't have a view on anything, you know like... I didn't have a political view, I didn't... I didn't know what my ethics were. I had some rules that I'd acquired from other people but it was all about erm... external verification for me... at the time it was about 'what would other people think, what's the social norm?' So I, within that... my spirituality didn't have a voice.</p>	<p>It was approximately 6 years after the loss of his father that he began to reconnect with his emotions. Until this time he had not deliberated over his views or engaged with his ethics in a personal manner</p> <p>Previously been a part of the 'They'</p> <p>Spiritual dimension had not developed</p>
401.	I: Ok	
<p>402.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss as transformative to the self and worldview</li> </ul>	<p>P: You know... and erm, which is very different to the life I live, I live now. Erm...</p>	<p>He is different now</p>

		Changed after loss
403.	I: Ok, and so it's changed now? Can I just check that you're alright or if you'd like a break?	
404.	P: Yeah, I am ok, thank you. Yes	
405.	I: Ok... and so that changed then? Where you became more spiritual as you connected with your emotional side? Is that, is that what you're saying?	
406.	P: Just, say that again please...	
407.	I: You sort of went back to having a faith as you connected more with your emotional life?	
408.	P: Erm... not a, not a faith as such, erm... I've explored Buddhism very conscientiously over the last few years but it's more... if I have a faith it's in... that I feel	There is a sense of spirituality which has grown out of his loss, and which is not understood as a faith but a

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to development of the spiritual dimension</li> </ul>	<p>something spiritually, and I don't understand it, but it's something that feels like it's connected to something bigger than me.</p>	<p>belief is something greater than himself. Explored Buddhism</p> <p>Growth on spiritual dimension</p>
409.	I: Ok...	
410.	P: So that, that's spirituality, as far as I'm concerned	
411.	I: Yes, that's your spirituality yeah... and, and	
412.	P: But it's not faith... I wouldn't, you know... it's a loaded term isn't it? Yeah	His spirituality is not a faith
413.	I: Ok... erm, and, and what role would you say that this has played in the experience of losing your father?	
414.	P: I didn't have erm, you know I really was without a spiritual anchor. I was easily blown around, erm, by...	<p>He was without a spiritual anchor.</p> <p>Sense of not being grounded</p>

415.	I: Ok, and...	
416.	P: ...by circumstance	
417.	I: And would you say that's different now?	
418.	P: Yes, very much so...	
419.	I: Ok can you say how?	
420. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	P: I think spiritual anchor is quite a helpful term for me... yeah I don't get blown around so much now like even in emotional difficulties... like I do have some of those right now at the moment so I, as I said erm... I'd say I know who I am and I'm very definite in, yeah... what, what my priorities are and my sense of right and wrong and my sense of meaning in the world. Erm, that's all very clear	Having a spiritual anchor has allowed him to be more grounded, less blown around by circumstance. He has engaged and consciously chosen his worldview. He is living more authentically now

	to me and it's not clear as in I could write it all down but to the extent I don't know, I'm clear I don't know.	
421.	I: Ok... yeah	
422.	P: Yeah... and... yeah	
423.	I: Ok, so and I think you've actually begun to talk about this but... what's with me at the moment is, erm... in what way would you say that you've changed as a person? I think you've sort of been talking about that but...	
424.	P: In, er... connecting it to the death of my dad?	
425.	I: To the loss of your father	
426.	P: Well... erm, yeah some repetition here but... it's kind of been peppered throughout the conversation hasn't it	The loss exaggerated tendencies that were already within him



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with traumatic loss in a similar way to other negative life experiences</li> </ul>	so I think... yeah the circumstances of his death and the fact of his death exaggerated tendencies that were already within me	
427.	I: Right	
428.	P: And, and... yeah exaggerated them significantly.	
429.	I: Yeah	
430. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to an initial disengagement with life</li> </ul>	P: And... a part of that was closing to my spiritual and emotional lives, and having closed I went a long way, for 6 or 7 years without, as I see it... living as me. I was obviously alive I was existing but I wasn't, like I can barely remember those years. Like if somebody says erm, 'do you remember that wedding in such and such a year?' I can remember that but if somebody says 'what happened in that 6 or 7 years?' I really struggle.	<p>It closed his spiritual and emotional world for as long as 6 or 7 years.</p> <p>This is to the extent that those years are blurry and he cannot remember much about them</p> <p>Personal and spiritual worlds disrupted</p>

431.	I: Mmm	
432.	P: And I kind of almost have to map it very erm, artificially.	
433.	I: Ok	
434.	P: By working out what happened, not remembering it.  So, erm... yeah so I was very changed in that sense and not, yeah not living, I mean I was... my life was very narrow.	There was a sense of not truly living or engaging, during the years that followed his father's death
435.	I: Ok	
436.  • Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life	P: And, and I was still maintaining the idea that I was successful and yeah... but I was very unhappy, very unhappy. So, erm... why 6 or 7 and not longer is I... I realised at some level that I was, something has to change. My romantic life kind of, erm, brought it to a	He was successful but unhappy. He was forced to address this because of his romantic life and the fact that being in a relationship made it harder to hide. He had to look at

	<p>head. That is important to me and I couldn't escape that so easily. You know when you're entering relationships with people it's far harder to hide than if you're just going back to an empty flat. You actually choose who you are... and you've got to make some decisions around er, yeah who you are that day and so on. Erm, so yeah tendencies were exaggerated and things reached a head. And I, I started to make decisions to change my attitude in life and at the beginning I didn't know what I was doing and I explored a lot of different things. I did some mindfulness based cognitive therapy</p>	<p>himself more and be aware of himself and choose how to be each day</p> <p>Sought out MBCT</p> <p>A more authentic existence. Making decisions about how to be</p> <p>Importance of professional assistance</p>
437.	I: Mmhmm	
<p>438.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-defining identity after loss</li> </ul>	<p>P: And a couple of caring friends led me to my own existential therapist which has set me on the path of getting here, to the New School and erm, I read. You</p>	<p>He was led to an existential therapist and this led him to change his</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to integrate loss/re-structure identity/narrative/worldview</li> <li>• Search for meaning following loss</li> </ul>	<p>know, bit of self help, a bit of religion, a bit of philosophy and erm, changed my job and er... just a whole load of</p>	<p>career. He has read self help books, religion, philosophy</p> <p>He is changed by the loss</p> <p>Engaging in a more meaningful way</p> <p>More authentic living</p>
439.	I: Lots of changes	
<p>440.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-defining identity after loss</li> <li>• Need to integrate loss/re-structure identity/narrative/worldview</li> </ul>	<p>P: Oh a whole host and yeah I mean now, I'm changing careers and erm...</p>	<p>He is changing career</p> <p>Very significant changes following loss</p>
441.	I: Yeah you said you were hoping to hear from a job	

442.	P: Yeah, erm... and you know I hope to become a psychotherapist and an existential coach	Plans to become a psychotherapist and existential coach
443.	I: Mmm	
444.	P: Erm, yeah, few changes and for somebody who lived a very conservative life because of my wish to protect myself emotionally, it can be, it can be difficult to be out there not earning and... it is difficult, not can be, it is difficult for me.	The transition is a difficult but purposeful one. He is not able to rely on the external (job, etc) to keep him away from his emotions  More authentic
445.	I: Mmm	
446. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li></ul>	P: Er, but erm, part of what has changed is for me is erm, yeah I want, I wanna live life and, and... hugely into authenticity and all its different meanings, you know,	Very important to live meaningfully and authentically. Important to be true to his existence

	and... and sincerity, how I engage with what life's about and... that's really, that's really important to me...	
447.	I: A re-evaluation...	
448.	P: Yeah huge... and it's so existential, it's so existential	Existential re-evaluation following loss
449.	I: Yeah	
450.	P: Erm I mean, I kind of, you know my therapy... now I've found a good therapist, a guy... I lost my initial one, she went back to America unfortunately and she was great	He has found a new therapist with whom he is happy
451.	I: Mm	
452.	P: But you know I will talk about something and it will soon get down to... it's just purely existential and that's	Existential philosophy has successfully called him back to

	<p>why... the course, not just the course but the discipline, the school, just absolutely fascinates me and I get absolutely passionate about it because it's how I understand life. And it's how I understood life as a young boy.</p>	<p>himself and has motivated him to live in a meaningful and authentic way.</p> <p>The philosophy resonates with him strongly</p> <p>Meaning in existential philosophy</p>
453.	I: So it makes sense to you	
454.	<p>P: Yeah massively, you know I've always been aware that I would die and I was very worried about it as a child and you know... it's just... and I've always been aware of choice and responsibility. They're not new things for me</p>	<p>The themes of choice, responsibility, and finiteness have always been present in his life from early childhood</p>
455.	I: Yeah I think that's been sort of a theme in much of what you've talked about in terms of responsibility	

456.	P: Yeah, yeah so I feel I've refound myself.	Re-discovered himself  More connected
457.	I: Yeah	
458.	P: And my values and then who I am and I'm doing a lot of things I used to do like I've started playing... I used to play chess and cricket very seriously when I was a child and... I stopped both of them for the same reason which was I took them too seriously and they became, yeah I defined myself by my ability and... [unclear]... but I've started doing those things again because I want to do them not because they're important in how good I am.	Living life in a different way now.  Allows himself to enjoy the things he used to enjoy but which he used to take seriously, and which would bolster his sense of self.  Living life differently, engaging, living more meaningfully
459.	I: So you're engaging in a totally different way now?	



460.	P: Yeah and... I don't, I'm not successful at it all the time because I can come out of that mode and I might find myself being too competitive or, you know just putting energy into the wrong thing but generally	<p>He is not always successful in living in this new way but moves in and out of it.</p> <p>Moments of authenticity and slipping back into older ways</p> <p>Overall more conscious of self</p>
461.	I: Which brings us back to what you said in the very beginning which was that a lot of this is still a challenge but something which you are engaging with	
462. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to transformation of self</li> </ul>	P: It is a challenge... but yeah... just what else can I do... it's a bit, you know I've... I've seen the error of my ways and so I'm left with that.	<p>He has seen the error of his ways and therefore cannot turn away from it.</p> <p>New worldview</p>

463.	I: Mm	
464.	<p>P: And well what do I do? Do I... I can't pretend as I did, I can't do that anymore that's not open to me, so... do I kind of limp along or do I really try and rise to the challenge of overcoming this. It's a bit like having erm, yeah a disability or something you know, where... you know somebody's had their erm, second time I've mentioned things happening to legs but erm, yeah you get something that makes you unable to run say and, say you're limping and well what do you do? You know I'd want to get out there and make the best of it because the alternative is worse, simply.</p>	<p>It is not possible to live inauthentically anymore because he has a different view of the world and of himself following his experience. It is no longer possible to unknow what he knows. He chooses to confront it</p>
465.	I: Yeah	
<p>466.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grieving a lost self</li> </ul>	<p>P: And this is ... or maybe I'm emotionally a little bit, damaged? Or... different? Whatever word I want to give</p>	<p>He sees himself a somewhat emotionally damaged now. Emotion</p>

	<p>there but I... I'm not as I was when I was a child. I was free flowing in who I was. I'm not. I'm trying to understand myself enough to kind of straighten out the kinks a little bit but they're never, they're never gonna be straight as they were. That's not how it works I don't think.</p>	<p>doesn't come freely in the way that it did when he was a child and he doesn't see himself as being able to return to that way of being</p> <p>Worldview changes following loss</p>
467.	I: Cos you don't go back to being the same?	
468.	<p>P: You make the best, and, and... it could be, maybe it could be better but probably not, erm, because I believed we're, we've evolved to be amazing [slight laughter] you know, and work perfectly.</p>	
469.	I: Hmm	

<p>470.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss forces a confrontation with the reality of life</li> <li>• Relationships with others are enriched</li> <li>• A more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	<p>P: And... and, yeah you mess with that by trauma and by choices around experiences and... you lose that natural... naturalness. And, be [unclear]... and it's given me a huge appreciation of other people's difficulties and just what happens in life that... I don't think I would change... cos er, that for me feels very real. Very, you know I, I was in, I tried to build the ivory tower for myself and I lived in it</p>	<p>The naturalness of human nature is compromised by trauma and life experience. His own experience of this has given him great appreciation of other people's difficulties and he sees this as a positive change.</p> <p>'tried to build the ivory tower' suggesting that his previous manner of being was not realistic, real, authentic</p> <p>An acceptance of the human condition and suffering which can't be turned away from</p>
<p>471.</p>	<p>I: Mm</p>	

<p>472.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-engaging in life in a more meaningful way</li> </ul>	<p>P: And... and the thought of living my life like that now... it doesn't seem like a life to me. Something's missing and so a bit of grit... like the [volunteering] this afternoon... I think I need to be near it.</p>	<p>There is a need to be connected with the realness and the messiness of life</p> <p>Volunteers at the Samaritans</p> <p>'grit' indicating the realness of life but which is somehow healthy/providing opportunity for growth and honest living</p> <p>Engaging in meaningful activity/volunteering following loss</p>
<p>473.</p>	<p>I: Yeah ok... yeah. Is there anything [name] that hasn't come up which you thought would? Or which feels important for you to say about your experience?</p>	

474.	P: Very little... there was, there's one memory that I had which didn't fit into	
475.	I: Ok... would you like to share it?	
476. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as interpersonal: comfort in shared experience</li> <li>Importance of support from partner/family in the experience of grief</li> </ul>	P: Yeah it was me and my elder brother sorting out, Dad had a business he was an architect so he'd had a, started a business down in [county] and erm, you know we, we had some wine there and it's a very strong memory of him and I being on the floor of my dad's study, and papers around and... and we were both laughing and crying at what we're doing. It's just a very strong memory for me	He has a memory of being with his brother, drinking wine and sitting on the floor of their father's office, going through his papers. Laughing and crying.  Sharing in experience as comforting
477.	I: Hmm	
478.	P: Cos you're in everything with Dad... he was... I haven't really talked too much about him I suppose.	Recalls his father as being unusual with a childish sense of humour, his

	Yeah he was erm, he was an unusual man and erm, had a very childish sense of humour and... so his study was full of little things that	study was full of things he found amusing
479.	I: Yeah	
480.	P: ...he found amusing and... so you're... there and you're kind of, you're in his space and er, where he died as well... he died in that room	They were in his room, going through things of his and being where he has also died.
481.	I: Oh ok	
482.	P: Yeah so I mean, the word surreal is overused but it is	
483.	I: Yeah	

484.	P: Cos we would have found things funny that he'd put somewhere and... but he's not there and...	
485.	I: Yeah	
486. • Grief as interpersonal	P: So we laughed and we cried.	They laughed and cried and shared the experience  Grief is interpersonal
487.	I: It sounds like you were real and connected in that moment	
488. • Grief as interpersonal	P: Yes, right, exactly... what I was gonna say was that's mourning properly, as it were... properly is not a good word but that was mourning.	In these moments he was connected with his feelings and this felt to him like 'proper grieving'
489.	I: That's what you were talking about when you said you wish...	



<p>490.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>• Comfort in shared experience</li> <li>• Grief as relational</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah... that was grieving and we were doing it together</p>	<p>They grieved together</p> <p>Comfort in shared experience</p> <p>Grief is interpersonal and needs a relational home</p>
<p>491.</p>	<p>I: And with your brother and you said you'd wished you seen more of them</p>	
<p>492.</p> <p>Comfort in engaging in activities that were shared with the lost one</p>	<p>P: Yeah... erm, and at some point I, I've gotta say I did pretty well around the funeral as well I was probably the [unclear]... and I cried a lot at the funeral and... me and my dad erm, shared the [town], erm, he was, he loved walking and... he got me into it and I loved it too, still do... and erm, he... Dad was somebody who kind of hinted at the beginning but he held himself hugely in reserve, hugely... emotionally. He had a difficult</p>	<p>He was able to cry a lot at the funeral. He shared a love for walking, as his father did. His father, like him, was emotionally reserved.</p>

	upbringing in some ways himself, er... and we've all learnt to do that so he has this... [slight laughter]	
493.	I: Yeah	
494.	P: Yeah it's kinda like, we have the legacy. And er, [smiling] he went and left us with it a little bit but erm, yeah so... the point I was saying was erm, when he was in the [town] he was able to be free. Freer. And he'd laugh a little bit more readily and it wouldn't be so thought about what he was, how he presented himself	When they were in a different town where they would walk a lot, his father was more emotionally free. He would laugh more readily and wasn't so controlled in how he presented himself
495.	I: Ok...	
496.	P: Er, so at the funeral, we'd been invited to read something, you know like er, I forget the name... the tribute... eulogy... and er, we all said no, very wisely. So it was just the minister... said he'd read some cards out	The mention of the town, which represented his father, triggered a very strong emotional response which led him to sob at the funeral.

	and the first card was from somebody who he also used to walk, walk with Dad and er, the first line was erm, 'we had many wonderful days in the [town]' and at the time the [town] represented dad for me you know big time... and I just... I just sobbed. Just really sobbed.	What represented his father strongly triggered the grief in him
497.	I: Yeah	
498.	P: Yeah... so we're talking about kind of, that early grieving and yeah I think I did grieve while I was down in [county]. Yeah... easier with people as you say...	He felt he was able to grieve in the early stages when he was with the people he was closest to
499.	I: Ok...	
500. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as inter personal</li> <li>Grief as relational</li> </ul>	P: You know, like with my brothers... but then you come... I came back and it... very disconnected from yeah that experience. That situation.	When he returned back to his life, away from family and the family home, he became disconnected from his experience

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of support from partner/family</li> </ul>		<p>Grief as interpersonal</p> <p>The importance of family</p>
501.	I: Ok. I'm aware of the time. And I don't want to keep you but is there anything else that you want to add or...?	
502.	P: Nothing I want to add. I want to give you the opportunity, I'm not, I'm not in a rush... give you the opportunity to ask anything else you'd like to...	
503.	I: Ok, no I think that... I think I'm happy to leave it where we are if you feel that there's nothing else that you want to say.	
504.	P: No, I'm happy thank you	
505.	I: Ok, erm, shall we start doing a debrief then?	

506.	P: Yes, yeah	
507.	I: So that you sort of know where we are with things.	
508.	P: Absolutely	
509.	I: Ok, so I will give you this as well but it's just to sort of... in fact would you like to read it again? And then sign it... The main things are that I will delete the recordings 6 months later, and the consent and er, the the written transcripts 5 years later. And that you can still write to me and say that you want to withdraw from the study. Erm, I have attached there a list of places that you can go to if you felt that you wanted to speak to someone more in a sort of therapeutic setting. Erm, And I think that's, that's more or less everything but if you would just like to sign for me there	

510.	P: Yes [reading and signing]... great	
511.	I: Ok and then there's a little card for you in there for you as well just to say thank you... and you can have that folder if you want to put it all in there.	
512.	P: Yeah I will thank you	
513.	I: Do you feel happy for me to turn the recorders off?	
514.	P: I do, at your leisure yeah	
<b>515.</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Transcript</b>
		<b>Exploratory Coding</b>
516.	I: Ok so we're recording now. Erm, what I want to do first [name] is just going through the paper work. Erm, first of all the Participant Information sheet which you've already read	

517.	P: Yes	
518.	I: But, erm I'd quite like you to just have a look at it again	
519.	P: Sure	
520.	I: Just to make sure that there's any...	
521.	P: Yeah	
522.	I: ...everything's straight forward and you don't want to ask me anything. And then I'll look at one with you.	
523.	P: Yes	
524.	I: Are you happy to read it or shall I read it to you or?	
525.	P: I'm happy to read it...	
526.	I: Ok...	

527.	[silence while reading... looks up and hands paper back]	
528.	I: Ok?	
529.	P: Yeah	
530.	I: So just to pick out some of the main points, erm... in terms of what happens to this data	
531.	P: Yes	
532.	I: Erm, 6 months from the time of my graduation I'll erase these recordings, and then 5 years after my graduation I'll destroy even the transcripts and the consent forms which we're about to go through now	
533.	P: Ok	
534.	I: Erm in terms of other people seeing the transcripts only my supervisor would see them but they would be all	



	anonymised so they wouldn't have a sense of who you were	
535.	P: Yeah... yeah	
536.	I: Erm, apart from that I think what I need to also let you know is there is a chance that the... this paper might be published. Erm, but you're able to sort of withdraw from the study at any time, erm, even after we've taken the interview.	
537.	P: Yeah	
538.	I: So you can just write to me later and say 'I don't think I want to do this anymore' and you can withdraw with no negative consequences at all. Erm... you may have... because this is a very sensitive topic	

539.	P: Mm!	
540.	I: There is a chance that you will feel distressed while we talk about it. Erm, so just to stress... I will offer you breaks throughout but if I'm not offering you a break	
541.	P: Yeah	
542.	I: ...at the time when you'd like to have one then just let me know and that'll be fine	
543.	P: Ok	
544.	I: And also if you want to just bring the interview to, to a gentle close we can do that too. Erm, I'll also give you a list of contacts at the end when we do a debrief, that signpost you to places where you can get some therapeutic assistance should you feel it necessary. I	

	know that you're in therapy at the moment but I will still give you...	
545.	P: ...Yeah	
546.	I: ...erm, a contact list anyway	
547.	P: Ok	
548.	I: Erm... I don't think that there's anything else that I really need to add. Erm, just to stress that, or just to let you know rather that... the interview is about 60 minutes but it may be less... it may be more. I won't hold you more than 90 though.	
549.	P: Yeah	

550.	I: It may feel like somewhat of a one-sided conversation.  I don't have very many questions... I'm really just interested in hearing about your experience.	
551.	P: Yes	
552.	I: No real agenda there I just want you to talk as much or as little as you feel comfortable. Erm, but it may feel one sided	
553.	P: Mmm	
554.	I: Erm, I may ask you questions that feel like obvious questions but the reason I'm asking those is so that I make sure I'm not making any assumptions. Erm, so you might wonder why I'm asking you something that feels a bit ridiculous but it's just so that I... I know for sure that what I think might be your experience is that...	

555.	P: Yes	
556.	I: Erm... and I think, I think that's everything is there anything you want to ask me before we get going?	
557.	P: No. I dont think there is, and I, I won't hesitate to... if something occurs to me. I, I'm, at this moment in time I'm very relaxed about the data, and erm, experience	
558.	I: OK	
559.	P: Er... so we'll see, we'll see how it unfolds	
560.	I: Yeah...yeah ok	
561.	P: Yes, thank you	
562.	I: You can hang on to that actually [PIS]. But what we'll do we'll go through the consent now.	

563.	P: Yeah	
564.	I: Erm, so if you just... I'd like if you could read and sign both of them and then you can keep one copy and I'll keep the other... and there's a pen just there for you.	
565.	[silence while signing... hands over paper]	
566.	P: Thank you	
567.	I: Ok, thanks so you can keep one copy and I'll keep the other one	
568.	P: Yeah	
569.	I: Erm... so the other admin remaining is the sort of risk assessment which is procedural but it's also important just to make sure that we keep you safe and we manage any risk in case any risk does come up. Erm, so some of	

	this may apply and some of it may not but we still do need to go through it.	
570.	P: Yeah	
571.	I: Erm, so... just answer as, as you see fit. Erm, have you ever tried to harm yourself in any way including through neglect?	
572.	P: No...	
573.	I: Ok	
574.	P: ...no I haven't	
575.	I: Are you currently having thoughts about hurting yourself in any way?	
576.	P: No	

577.	I: Do you have children under the age of 18 in your care?	
578.	P: No	
579.	I: Ok so... what I'll do is because of...because you've answered the way you have we won't draw up a safety plan other than to say that you'll have the contact sheet in case your risk changes and then you'll sort of know where to go in case it does happen...	
580.	P: That's fine, yeah	
581.	[signing of Risk Form]	
582.	I: Ok... if you could just...	
583.	P: ...yes	



584.	I: ...write your name and sign as well. Ok, thank you.  Alright. Do you feel ready to start?	
585.	P: I do. I do thanks, yeah	
586.	I: Ok so before we sort of go straight into it... erm, I  really am so grateful for your, for your being here. It's  really great that you are and I appreciate it	
587.	P: You're very welcome	
588.	I: [smile]... could you tell me a bit about what motivated  you to take part?	
589.	P: Yeah sure, erm... as you know I'm a student on the  DProf.	
590.	I: Mmm	

591.	P: And I recognise I'll be sat where you are in a few years time, and so there's a sense of 'we're all part of one big group', and I wanted to contribute to that.	
592.	I: Mm!	
593.	P: And there's also the erm... the more selfish reason of I want to gather some experience of what it's like, what it's like as an interviewee and I can maybe see a little bit of what it's like as an interviewer. Er, so yeah I, I, I kind of, I'm not refusing any opportunity to learn a bit more.	
594.	I: OK	
595.	P: Yeah it's definitely all of those. And, and also as a third reason, erm... I said I'd get going, erm... yeah I... my Dad's death is 11 years ago this February	

596.	I: This month, yeah...	
597.	P: ...And I have thought about him a fair amount recently	
598.	I: Mmm	
599.	P: Erm... more than the last few years maybe. And that draws me to commit to something where I'm going to be exploring that in a particular environment. So that's attractive to me as well	
600.	I: Ok so you've been thinking about him more of late than the last few years?	
601.	P: Yeah... erm, you know one reason would be I've met someone who's important to me...	
602.	I: Mmhmm	

<p>603.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as ongoing/forever</li> </ul>	<p>P: ...and... whenever that's happened in the past, these 11 years, since Dad... you're very aware that Dad won't meet that person. If we're to go on to.... you know... family and so on</p>	<p>Throughout his life when he meets someone new, he is aware that they won't meet his father</p> <p>Stops at 'since Dad...' implying some difficulty in using the word 'death'</p> <p>Loss is always there</p>
<p>604.</p>	<p>I: Yeah</p>	
<p>605.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as ongoing/forever</li> </ul>	<p>P: So yeah that's... those feelings of er, sorrow and the sadness at not being able to change that</p>	<p>There is sadness that his partner won't meet his father. Sadness at not being able to change that</p> <p>Loss is final and cannot be reversed</p>

606.	I: Ok so it feels like a pertinent time to be thinking of him not just because of the month but because of what's happening in your life as well.	
607.	P: Yeah, I think so and I think I contacted you before I'd met erm... we'd be able to say I mean it was the 16th Dec when I met ah, Marie, and erm, so may have been before	
608.	I: Yeah	
609.	P: But... and I think I was thinking about him quite a bit before that and that does happen from time to time. I'm not quite sure what has motivated that before, this relationship but I think something has.	<p>He had been thinking about his father quite a bit before meeting the person in his life</p> <p>Grief takes figure or ground at different times, but it is always there</p>

610.	I: Ok so there are times when it's, sort of, more present and other times when it sort of subsides and... it's a kind of ebb, ebb and flow.	
611.	P: Yes, yeah	
612.	I: Ok	
613.	P: And er, it was the ten year anniversary last year. Its er, 23rd of February, so... his death, and erm... yeah I mean that... and his father died in March	Ten year anniversary was last year
614.	I: Oh ok...	
615. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the fragility of life</li> <li>Awareness of death/finiteness</li> </ul>	P: ...erm, last year... so there's a few things that may have taken a while to maybe surface within me. Er, and I also... I meditate and, and last year I'd... I'd done a few things that led me to meditate a bit more on death and	There are things around his loss that have recently surfaced within him. He has been meditating in general and meditating on death and impermanence and fragility and

	impermanence and fragility and yeah... dad comes up in that	these themes are connected with the loss of his father
616.	I: Yeah... ok. Erm, could you, could you tell me a little about the loss in terms of ... I mean I know who you lost but the circumstances around it?	
617. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of relationship prior to death</li> <li>• Feelings of guilt and responsibility around the loss</li> <li>• Feelings of regret associated with loss</li> </ul>	P: Yes it was it was my father, and erm... [sigh] it's worth saying I was extremely close to him. Erm, after his, his death me and my middle brother... I have, I have two older brothers... wrote down the roles he played for us, you know in our lives and... we got to 17 major headings, you know er... mental and that, that kind of thing... and certainly best friend for me. Erm, and somebody who certainly loved unconditionally and, and lived through us in many ways. Erm, perhaps to too	Participant lost his father, who he was extremely close to. After his death he and his brothers thought about the role their father had played and came up with 17 major headings, indicating how important he was in their lives. He was a very dedicated father and one who sacrificed a lot to look after his family and his children.

	<p>great an extent... erm, he, he sacrificed himself hugely in providing for us and then when we were in our 20s making sure we had what we needed and erm, to, to the neglect of himself I wou... I would say and... that was part of his psychology as I, as I see it. Coming out of his own situation. Erm, and I, I think that was partly my belief is that that was partly responsible for his death the way he, the way he denied himself certain things, and... I think staying with the family and deciding to be that kind of father</p>	<p>Participant sees this as partly responsible for his death.</p> <p>Some sense of responsibility/guilt for the death</p>
618.	I: Mmmhmm	
<p>619.</p> <p>Feeling associated with loss:</p> <p>feelings of regret</p>	<p>P: ...and very much present, was part of what didn't allow himself the nourishment which may have allowed him to live a bit longer and I'll explain that bit with the circumstances of his death...</p>	<p>He may have lived longer if he had not sacrificed his own wellbeing</p> <p>Sense of regret</p>



620.	I: Sure	
621.	P: ...so it was a, it was a heart attack	
622.	I: OK	
623.	P: I forget the technical term of what actually... erm, an infarction I think is the term. The point is nobody knew it was coming, I really don't think <i>he</i> did	Sudden heart attack, nobody, not even his father would have had any clue that it would happen
624.	I: Mmm	
625.	P: Erm, we found in his diary afterwards something we didn't ever tell mom but we found erm, we found a couple of appointments for the heart specialist and we also found a set of numbers which we... I do a lot of sports and I recognise them as pulse, you know pulse	There is some indication that his father was aware of a potential heart problem because he had pulse and blood pressure readings in his diary

	readings, you know, and blood pressure readings as well at certain times. So there was something...	
626.	I: Mmmm he was aware of something	
627. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of meaninglessness/absurdity in the loss</li> <li>The importance of understanding what happened in the process of sense-making/moving through grief</li> </ul>	P: ...something... erm, and he had, he had been on medication for high blood pressure. I'm not sure if he was at the time I, I, I can't recall. Erm... and, so, yes... and he was, he'd just been out for a run. Erm, so it... he jogged... and he'd been very happy the few days before and... certainly as mom would describe it [slight laughter]. Erm, but he had just been for a run and Mom heard him counting and you know she didn't ever understand what that was erm, until you know we stand there thinking he's probably just checking his pulse... you know... and it would have been that. From what she, from what she described. So... yeah, and, he... yeah he	<p>He had been very happy in the days before, pointing to the absurdity of what happened and how quickly life can change. He had been out for a run and suddenly dropped to the floor and died. He died on the spot.</p> <p>An importance in understanding the details of what happened in the moments prior to the loss</p>

	hit the ground dead, as we were told by the ambulance men, you know	
628.	I: So really, really sudden	
629. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of understanding what happened in the process of sense-making/moving through grief</li> </ul>	P: Yeah they said, the doctor had said he, he hit his head... and he had a cut, but it hadn't bled. Which, I don't know the doctor said that means he was, his heart had stopped, which makes some sense. Erm, so I suspect he didn't know a great deal about it, erm... and mom, mom heard the thud and she found him and..  .obviously it was... it was very traumatic for her. Erm, so that's er, that's the sort of, the, the, the real small detail around...	He died at that very moment and the participant's mother found him on the floor. This was traumatic for her.  Participant has tried to understand what happened
630.	I: ...around what happened yeah	
631.	P: ...for me...	

632.	I: Yeah	
633.	I was, I was abroad, I was in [country]. And Dad died on the Sunday afternoon. I was found on the Thursday, contacted on the Thursday... so little bit of time afterwards	Participant found out some days after his father died because he had been on holiday
634.	P: Yeah	
635.	I: Erm... and... in not overly pleasant circumstances so... we were out in a place called [name], out on the coast, and... when I'm on holiday or out travelling I don't like to, people to know where I am [laughs], because that's, that's kind of the point. But I... my friend who they knew I was with got me email from his dad, saying that the West Country police... mom and dad were down in [county] at the time... were looking for me. And I was to phone home, so... I can remember really clearly the. .. I	Participant was on holiday and remembers very clearly when he was tracked down through a friend he was with. He wasn't very comfortable in the country where they were and he remembers vividly being in the shower [just before hearing the news]

	was in the shower and it was one of those holidays that had already been, I hadn't felt very comfortable in the country	Some aspects of the experience are very clear
636.	I: Oh ok...	
637.	P: ...for a number of reasons... just cruelty to animals and incredible chauvinism as I, as I saw it	
638.	I: Mmm	
639.	P: I hadn't wanted to go there and so I wasn't feeling particularly great, on the holiday	He had not wanted to go there and was not feeling very good there
640.	I: Ok... ok	
641.	P: Erm... and I can remember the, the jolt of being told that I... a very, very good friend of mine... the message and his, his countenance was... he was just really	When his friend told him that he had news for him, he knew immediately that it was something very important. He could

	<p>serious. Like he said, before he said anything he said...</p> <p>I've got something, to tell you... I could just tell, I could just tell it was something really important</p>	<p>see it on his friend's face and there was a sense of 'knowing'</p>
642.	I: You had a sense that he knew?	
643.	P: I... I knew he knew something was very serious	
644.	I: Ok...	
645. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss as life changing</li> </ul>	<p>P: And, and... I came out and sat on the bed in my towel and I said erm, this could be a life changer. I remember very, very clearly. So I borrowed one of the lads we were with mobile and called home. Pretty, pretty much straight away as soon as I'd got some clothes on you know... And my sister in law answered, the home phone in [county] and... erm, she's never there. She has erm, she had very bad post natal depression and, and...</p>	<p>He remembers sitting on the bed to hear the news and thinking to himself that what he was about to hear could be life changing. He has very clear memory of those moments. He assumed both of his parents had died because an unlikely family member answered the phone</p>

	irritable bowel and she doesn't travel, and she was down there in [county].. they live in [city] so that wasn't.. I thought th... I thought both mom and dad had died, that was my presumption.	Traumatic loss as life changing
646.	I: Ok	
647.	P: My presumption so...	
648.	I: So you were thinking that it was... some, someone that passed away	
649.	P: Yes... yeah I had in, I had in my head a road traffic accident.	
650.	I: Ok	
651.	P: I did, and erm... so she said, anyway she said... 'oh [participant name] love... 'or something to that effect, I	As soon as his mother told him that his father had had a heart attack, he

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking a continued relationship with the lost one: meaning found in honouring the lost one</li> <li>• Amnesia following realisation of loss</li> </ul>	<p>remember it very... sort of soft. And put my mom on, so I knew mom was alive and then she said... erm... she said 'it's your dad... he's had a heart attack'... And I said, almost interrupting 'but he'll be ok, won't he?' and she said 'No, erm, he's gone'... and... and... I can't remember what happened after that on the call. Erm, I don't suppose it was very long after that... and erm, one thing I always remember which is a perhaps, very much a peripheral detail but I'd been thinking, a few years before that I wanted tattoo...and my, my second thought, after coming off the phone, apart from the horror of it... was 'I know what my tattoo is going to be [laughter]'. Which I, I found, erm, funny how the mind works. And I... I had the tattoo</p>	<p>immediately sought reassurance that he would be ok. Once he was told that his father had died, he is unsure about how the rest of the conversation went. The news was met with horror. Recalls his second thought being about the tattoo he would get to honour his father</p> <p>Amnesia</p> <p>Importance of honouring lost one</p> <p>Seeking continued relationship with the lost one</p>
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652.	I: Yeah that's interesting it's almost a way of sort of keeping him forever	
653.	P: Yeah and at the time it seemed really appropriate.	
654.	I: Yeah	
655. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seeking a continued relationship with the lost one: meaning found in honouring the lost one</li> </ul>	P: And... so just... down on my stomach and it's, it's a Chinese symbol for 'Dad' and it's very private... nobody knows what it means unless I tell them and.. yeah... at the time it seemed, it seemed really appropriate. Erm... and yeah it's nice cos people ask and I can say... I can mention him	<p>The tattoo is private but it is nice to explain to people its meaning and talk of his father.</p> <p>Honouring the lost one is important, talking about him and doing something in his name</p>
656.	I: Yeah, yeah... that is nice. I'm hearing just how sudden it was and that...	
657.	P: Yes	

658.	I: ...to the extent that there's... even a blur around what happened in those moments.	
659.	P: Yeah	
660.	I: I wonder if you're able to describe what was going on for you in terms of sort of a response... as much as you can remember...	
661.	I: Yeah	
662. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memory is disjointed/not consistent following loss</li> </ul>	P: Erm... yeah some of it's a blur, some of it's really clear. It's, it's kind of one or the other	Some aspects are difficult to remember and some are very vivid memories  Memory is disjointed/not consistent

663.	I: So a part of that experience is that it was quite blurry, I suppose?	
664. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of utter shock following traumatic loss</li> <li>• Numbing associated with shock as self-preserving</li> </ul>	P: Yes, er, but as I say something of it is like real 20-20 stuff and... so I, I, I clearly remember walking back into the sort of the backpackers place... the guys were sort of keeping an eye on me and I was on the phone I think and they were then there, there was three other lads... they, they stepped in and I'd got to get home and erm, they started discussing how that would be... and... and erm... so you also, my thoughts were very much I think tha... I think I was stunned...	Some memories are very clear. He recalls clearly that his friends were keeping an eye on him while he was on the phone. There was a feeling of being stunned
665.	I: Mmm	
666.	P: ...and then progressively I kicked into the mode of 'I need to do something, I need to get somewhere. And I	And from stunned he went into thinking about the practicalities of getting back home. This provided a focus and kept him

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on practicalities assisting in the moving through grief initially</li> </ul>	<p>had a task... er, to focus on and I would focus on that until it was done, and then, I'd deal with something...</p>	<p>from having the full response of grief until he got home</p>
667.	<p>I: So the immediate thing was the practical side of 'I need to get home...'</p>	
668. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus on practicalities assisting in moving through the initial period</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah... yeah and that was very easy in that sort of situation because I did need to get home, and... so we hired a car and we went over the mountains back to [location] and er... through the night... er, kind of the only car in the village it felt like, and the guy was pretty much drunk and it was... it was, it was a pretty hairy drive. And I watched some comedy on the radio</p>	<p>Remembers travelling to get home and the drive was unpleasant but he watched comedy on the radio. It was easy to hold off the reaction because he had getting home to focus on</p> <p>Postponing the full impact of grief to deal with practicalities</p>
669.	<p>I: Mmm</p>	

<p>670.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss being met with a sense of the full grief response being held off</li> </ul>	<p>P: From my, on the ipod...err, laughing. You know... erm... but very aware of the holding back... of whatever my experience was going to be</p>	<p>Recalls laughing while listening to the comedy show and being aware of the grief response being held off</p> <p>Anticipation of grief</p>
<p>671.</p>	<p>I: So there is something about putting it on pause until you were able to... till you could actually... take on the...</p>	
<p>672.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss being met with a sense of its full response being held off</li> </ul>	<p>P: It's that... I didn't want to... let the, the tidal wave over me until I was somewhere, where...well not there!</p> <p>Basically, I mean... and not with something to do... and...</p>	<p>Grief likened to a tidal wave which was to go over him. He could not allow that to happen until he had reached home</p> <p>Grief as a wave that takes over</p>

673.	I: So it was like you were trying to... you were sort of postponing it...	
674.	P: Yes... absolutely and, and, and that becomes more relevant when I tell you how I dealt with my, my grief.	He was postponing his grief
675.	I: Ok	
676.	P: Erm... cos I think that pausing... that suspending... set in motion a... my way of dealing with the death of my, my father.	The way that he was postponing his grief in these initial days set in motion his manner of grieving for his father thereafter  Process of grief
677.	I: Ok	
678.	P: Erm, and I, I get to that quite quickly but let me tell you how I got home because it's important as far as...	

679.	I: Yeah, sure...	
680.	P: ... the practical suspension was, was all happening and so [airline] were great in terms of moving flights	
681.	I: Mmm	
682. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationships with others are enriched</li> </ul>	P: We stayed in a hotel in [location] just for a few hours and then [name] one of the guys, who I'm very close with, far more now than I was then	<p>He stayed overnight at a hotel with one of his friends, who he subsequently became much closer to.</p> <p>Loss has an effect on relationships: enriching</p>
683.	I: Mmm	
684.	P: Flew back with me... er... the other two were gonna follow on the next flight and... I really appreciated the	His friends returned to the UK with him and this felt like support and solidarity

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li> </ul>	solidarity of 'well if you're going, we're going' and er...  And he... [name] ...the guy that flew back with me... he erm, he's somebody who doesn't really talk very much and I remember him... he did not stop talking. So he was kind of complicit in the suspension...	which he very much appreciated. He was aware of the friend who travelled with him having nervous energy and talking a lot
685.	I: Ok...	
686.	P: You know... it wasn't about... he was keeping me active...	
687.	I: So...	
688.	P: To keep me thinking about the minutae of the dinner or the breakfast we had or... whatever it was...	Friend was complicit in keeping him from thinking about the reality of the situation
689.	I: Mmm	



690.	P: And a bit of guys humour, I seem to remember, you know, in terms of, this is fun isn't it?	
691.	I: There was a sense of people trying to hold you... in a way?	
692.	P: Yes... yes there was	
693.	I: Ok	
694. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li></ul>	P: And particularly [name]... I don't know the other guys [names]... I don't think they quite knew where to place themselves and when I got back to London and I was just filling a bag in my flat... erm, my housemate came in and she really shouldn't have done... she should have been at work and I told her and she, she'd met my dad and she just did not know what... to do... or say or	He felt held by his friends. There was a sense of his house mate not being able to handle seeing him and did not know what to do or say.  He 'let her off the hook' indicating that he was let down or could have been upset with her in some way

	anything and... I... I recognised that and really stepped in for her and let her off that hook, if you like. Because...	
695.	I: You were feeling that you had to put her at ease?	
696.	P: Yeah... and I...	
697.	I: In a way looking after her?	
698. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved</li> </ul>	P: In a way... and also... I was allowing us both not to go there...	<p>He did not want her to talk about his father's death because he was not ready to confront it. She had not been complicit in helping him to hold off his response</p> <p>A need to hold off grief</p>
699.	I: Ok! So this is still that...	
700.	P: I still... oh yeah very much...	

701.	I: Still in that mode of.... Ok	
702.	P: So I've got to get myself to [county] and I'm in my flat in London	
703.	I: Ok so you're not home yet...	
704. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical assistance experienced as positive support</li> </ul>	P: Now... I was working at, for an American law firm at the time and I'd only been there 6 months and... erm, it's a very hard place to work, and... erm, did me quite a lot of emotional damage in many ways. Some of which I'll talk about because it's relevant for the bereavement bit... but they put... they gave me a car from the airport to wait for me and then... back to the... Paddington station for the train. Erm, and sorted out my train fare and so on and they did a really good job and they'd also	<p>He was newly working at a law firm which he found to be a difficult place to work.</p> <p>Feels it did him emotional damage.</p> <p>However in the beginning they facilitated his travel to his parents place and helped the police to locate him on holiday</p>

	helped the police find me... by going through my emails and seeing who, who I was with...	
705.	I: Ok... that's how they found...	
706. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical assistance experienced as positive support</li> <li>• Grief as relational</li> <li>• Turning away from the pain of grief</li> <li>• Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>• Disruption of the physical world: feeling separate from the immediate environment</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... they'd been... kind of... really amazing about it actually. Compared to how they normally were [laughs]... so .... There's also... I was being... I was being supported. I was. Erm, from not necessarily places I would expect. So then [sigh]... the train... back to [county]... and... I can't remember much about that journey, I really can't... I can remember arriving. Erm, yeah I, this is speculation in a way but I, I suspect I can't remember because I wasn't allowing myself, you know, to absorb information, erm... and then... when I got to [name of station] it was my... got off the train and my mom and my elder brother were there and I, I sobbed. I	<p>The law firm where he worked had been very helpful and supportive at the beginning. He does not remember the journey to the county and feels this is because he was purposely not absorbing information. When he saw his mother and older brother he finally sobbed.</p> <p>Grief finding a 'relational home' with safe people. Grief is interpersonal.</p> <p>Importance of significant others in grieving</p>

	sobbed and mom sobbed. Erm, I think we probably all did.	
707.	I: It was something about... you allowed yourself...	
708. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as relational</li> <li>• Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>• Importance of significant other(s) in the grieving process: family</li> <li>• Grief as an uncontrollable force</li> </ul>	P: Yes... yes. I couldn't help it at that point. The two things are entwined aren't they? But yeah, it, it, it was ok ... it was ok then...	<p>He could not hold it in once he saw his family. He was finally in a place where it was okay to allow it.</p> <p>Grief needing a relational home</p> <p>Importance of significant others</p>
709.	I: Ok	
710.	P: Or at least it... it did burst through. Erm, but my, you know that... that wasn't.... I didn't cry much	<p>Even though he had eventually cried, it was not much</p>

711.	I: Mm	
712.	P: Erm, and because the funeral had been postponed until I'd been found... it was then very quick, once I got back. I can't remember what day, I think it was the Monday. So dad had died on Sunday so it was 8 days. And I got back on the Friday...	The funeral had been postponed until his arrival
713.	I: Right	
714.	P: ....sort of erm... yeah it would have been, I guess it was light at the station so it must have been before 6 o'clock. It was, it was late February so ... but it can't have been much earlier cos I, I had to get back, obviously. Erm... yes so I was kind of thrown, thrown into it...	

715.	I: Mmm	
716.	P: Er... and... sort of slightly difficult to, to not look at this from the back. From the end of, well from where I am looking, backwards	
717.	I: Yeah that's ok...	
718. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grieving as idiosyncratic</li> </ul>	P: How er, how I mourned Dad... was, wasn't... there's no right way but it wasn't the best way for me. I er...	<p>He feels he did not grieve in the best way for himself</p> <p>The importance of grieving freely</p>
719.	I: Ok... how come?	
720. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for the wellbeing of others who were bereaved</li> </ul>	P: I... Mom was... just... torn apart by it. She had, she had had a very strong father figure and then marriage straight from home er, with her parents of.... A very	<p>His mother was torn apart by the grief.</p> <p>Participant was very aware of the wellbeing of his mother</p>

	strong man you know and... so in terms of what he took of the emotional burden of the unit	
721.	I: How you describe your father sounds...	
722.	P: Yeah	
723.	I: ...a bit similar to how you describe your Moms father	
724. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for the wellbeing of others who were bereaved</li> <li>Looking after others affecting one's process</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... yeah... that's fair. Yes. Erm... and I took on the mantle and my other brothers did... my brothers did to some degree but I was single at the time... they were both... one was engaged and one was married so I had more time. Erm, and emotional space maybe. I took on the mantle of, of kind of filling that vacuum that Dad had left Mom. And I'm not sure I regret it but what it did was it meant I was looking. I was kind of suffering vicariously	When his father died he assumed the role of his father in relation to his mother. He took that role because he was single and was able to. He doesn't regret it but is aware of how it denied him of his experience because he was concerned with hers.



	on Mom's behalf and not really looking at myself and what I needed.	
725.	I: Ok so where was... what ha... where was all that stuff that was going on for you?	
726.	P: Erm... I don't know where it was...	
727.	I: It was just...?	
728. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as all-encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	P: Yeah it wasn't getting attention and I... I think I only had a week off work and I was back in work and... might have been two I don't think it was. Erm, and I was all at sea, I really was, I was erm... I can remember just that feeling of my, my brain swimming in its own kind of... floating in its own kind of juices really. I was very demotivated.	He wasn't able to pay attention to, or tend to his own experience. He found himself going back to work almost immediately. He was not ready for it and felt very demotivated

		'...brain was swimming in its own kind of juices' indicating that he was unable to focus or do anything productive at work
729.	I: That's really powerful, your brain floating in its own juices. Can you sort of ... just describe a little bit more what was going on?	
730. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the physical world: a sense of not being in-sync with the surroundings</li> </ul>	P: Yeah just erm... I was behind what was happening. I was... in terms of reaction times almost	He felt as though he had not caught up with what was happening. There is a sense of not being connected with the world
731.	I: Ok... ok...	

732.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embodiment: the feeling of being outside one's body</li> <li>Disruption of the personal world: being estranged from one's own experience</li> </ul>	<p>P: Life seemed to be erm, like a TV show that I was in and I wasn't.... It wasn't really computing erm, I felt very estranged from my experience and almost erm, yeah catching up. Like a bit like when I came in tonight but times a hundred.</p>	<p>Disruption in experience</p> <p>A feeling of being 'estranged' from his experience, indicating a difficulty in making sense of it or being connected with it</p> <p>Numbness/shock</p>
733.		I: Yeah	
734.		<p>P: And... yeah in terms of the motivation to engage with, particularly with work... the experience of being at work</p>	<p>Being at work was very difficult.</p>
735.		I: Mmhmm	
736.		<p>P: I... why would I? I couldn't engage with that. And erm, erm... can't remember. Can't remember to what extent I thought, I thought about Dad but I really struggled. To</p>	<p>'why would I' indicating work would naturally not be a priority during this time</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as all encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	<p>the point of having to say I... I'm struggling at work and... they were, having been great, were really quite poor then, er...</p>	<p>Found it very difficult to engage with work to the extent that he had to speak to his work about it but they were not supportive at this time</p>
737.	<p>I: Ok... so they weren't really able to extend that support when you were on the ground in the office and you became aware of that?</p>	
<p>738.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Imposed time-frame for grief as unhelpful</li> <li>Concern for others who were bereaved</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah it was business as usual very quickly... it may have been 3 weeks or a month, I don't know, but it was... things needed doing. Er, and erm, you know one of the partners who had lost his Dad at a similar age took me out to a coffee one time which, I really... straight, almost straight away once I got back which I really appreciated. It was an experience he found, he</p>	<p>There was a lack of care from workplace and an expectation that things could go back to normal very quickly. Went for coffee with someone who had a similar experience and this was appreciated. He looking after his mother to the extent that he would take all calls from her, which</p>

	<p>found difficult. I was erm, I was... allowing mom to phone me whenever she wanted to, which when you're starting a legal career and you're trying to focus on that it was... it was probably a really bad thing for me but... erm, because it would just completely interrupt me emotionally, spiritually... and, and of course physically in the middle of a day. I worked hard I think. I tried to work hard, at least I was there a lot. Erm, and that wa... again that was still a suspension of...</p>	<p>proved difficult in a new job. Engaging with these calls and his mother's distress was a spiritual, emotional, physical disruption.</p> <p>Concern for others</p>
739.	I: Yeah there's still a sense of you not really... in its entirety confronting what had happened	
740.	P: Right...	
741.	I: Is that accurate?	
742.	P: Yes, it is, it is...	

743.	I: Sort of holding your mom and being sort of responsible for her... being at work but not quite being able to engage with what's happening	
744.	P: Yeah	
745.	I: And this general sense of being in the world but somewhat... a few steps behind	
746. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of the physical world: a sense of not being in-sync with the world</li> <li>• Grief as all-encompassing: difficulty in doing other things</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... yeah... you see that feeling portrayed in films... when somebody's had... a hand grenades gone off near them and there's... like in Saving Private Ryan somebody's just completely discombobulated and can see the small sensor working but the mind just isn't getting traction on what needs to be done and what's going on	There is a sense of not being able to engage with the world at the pace at which it is moving, behind somewhat behind at all times. Seeing but being unable to engage properly. Some disconnect between self and the world

747.	I: So you were aware of yourself being and acting in the world but you weren't sort of really engaged...	
748. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as an ongoing process</li> </ul>	P: Emotionally I certainly wasn't, I certainly wasn't... And that continued for quite a long time. In, in fact in a sense it may sense may still be continuing.	<p>He was not engaging emotionally with his grief and questions whether that is still the case</p> <p>Questioning of self</p> <p>Trying to understand experience</p> <p>The feeling that there is still more grieving to do</p>
749.	I: Ok... so it still may be continuing... can you say...	
750. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as physical</li> </ul>	P: Well I have erm, yeah... at times of distress, particularly emotional distress I experience something that I call, it's like emotional lock down and I really	<p>Participant finds that he is very emotionally distressed, there is some 'lock down' which prevents him from having the</p>

	struggle with it. It's erm, I have an incredibly physical reaction so adrenalin, heart pumping...	full experience. However there is a very physical response of heart racing and increased adrenalin  Grief is physical
751.	I: ...Ok	
752. • Grief as physical	P: ... so I sleep badly, erm... and things like erm, my digestion... I won't be hungry, my bowels are, kind of loose... it's a real fight or flight kind of...	Sleep is affected, digestion, hunger, bowels, all affected. He has a strong physical response
753.	I: So during this time you had a real sort of physical response as well?	
754. • Grief as disabling	P: Yes, as I remember it. And it's something that became very ordinary for me and I had it before Dad. I see Dad's death as exaggerating tendencies that were already there but this was like the biggest impact I can	He always had this type of response to emotional stress but it was magnified



	<p>imagine besides me losing my legs or something... really directly to me.</p>	<p>following the loss of his father. Loss of his father is only second to the loss of a limb</p>
755.	I: Mmm	
<p>756.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption of the personal world: loss of awareness of self</li> <li>• Disjointed memory following loss</li> </ul>	<p>P: Erm, and I... I lose the clarity on what I actually did in those months afterwards. Erm, which says something in itself.</p>	<p>Difficulty remembering the first few months</p> <p>Amnesia following loss</p> <p>Disruption of personal world: loss of awareness of self</p>
757.	I: Yeah...	
758.	I: Actually... erm...	

759.	I: Actually can you put into words what you feel that says about your experience?	
760.	P: Yeah erm... it's like the train journey down to [county] to the air... from London to see Mom for the first time	
761.	I: Yeah	
762. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the physical world: not taking in the surroundings</li> </ul>	P: Erm, I mean that's... it's a very scenic journey and I would have thought there would be some contrast for me that recognised in that here I am, I've done this journey a lot, and I'm now doing it for these reasons. I'd have thought that would really stick in my mind. It would have been day light... I would have seen the views, but there's... there's nothing there and I had to change at one station and get a more local train before I met my	<p>He remembers little of details around that time such as the train journey to his parents' house. There is a part of this which remains not understood in that he still has an expectation that it would have stood out to him. The only thing he remembers is the moment when he saw them</p> <p>Shock prevents the full feeling</p>

	Mom and brother. I can't remember any events. Only... seeing them	Separation from the world
763.	I: Ok... and how long would you... how long do you think that stayed with you? This general sort of sense that you're describing.	
764.	P: Well... erm, in one sense it's stayed for sort of 6 or 7 years... in one sense	In some respects he had this feeling for as long as 6 or 7 years
765.	I: Mmm	
766. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: not connected with self</li> </ul>	P: In that... it wouldn't have been the sole factor but I was in a life at that time... you know the US law firm was a big part of that world where I wasn't happy and I didn't know who I was and I was making choices which weren't good ones for me. Because I was, as I see it now looking back... emotionally, erm... well incredibly	He was leading a different type of life then, which placed emphasis on gaining emotional stability externally, through salary, fitness, hobbies and a job that held a certain status.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with loss in a similar way to other difficult feelings</li> </ul>	<p>insecure. Er, and... hurt, I imagine. Erm, and so I, I surrounded myself with erm... things that I thought had value in that... like... a big pay cheque, I kept myself incredibly fit... Erm... yeah the status of the legal career. Erm, like... hobbies like sailing and skiing and... you know...</p>	<p>External locus of security. Some distance from self.</p> <p>Seeking security externally</p>
767.	I: Yeah	
<p>768.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: not connected with self</li> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	<p>P: Bought my apartment and, you know I really see it as a shell. I was, I was kind of building and... but I was profoundly dissatisfied, as I, as I learnt, because I wasn't listening to my emotional life at all...</p>	<p>He was building a life that allowed him to keep distant from his emotional world</p>
769.	I: And you think that this was a result of the loss that you experienced?	

<p>770.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manner of grieving as personal</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah... er... it's not the only thing and you know in my therapy I've traced the decisions I was making back to another traumatic experience from my time in secondary school and I won't go into that too far but I'd... I'd been a real golden boy and from there I was in this... in [city] Grammar, a huge school erm... and I'm the smallest, I don't know anything, everyone's been to prep school. And I had... again as I see it, I had learnt to associate particularly my mother's love with my goldenness. Yeah, and I really, really struggled. And I started making choices around pretending I was ok. But stifling my emotional experience and getting on with the job which is exactly what I was doing after Dad. I mean you really can... if you extrapolate it they're straight lines [laughter]. It's how it feels and it's how I see it</p>	<p>From an early age he began to set aside his emotional needs to please his mother and associated his success with her love. This was extended into his manner of grieving in that he stifled his emotional experience following the loss of his father.</p> <p>Grieving is an extension of one's general manner of coping</p>
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771.	I: Wow, right ok... so there is something about neglecting what was going on from... from <i>this</i> time when you lost your dad but also from before when you were really quite a young boy.	
772.	P: Yes, yes... and then afterwards as well. And it's been - jumping around a little but - in the last 5 years since I left that law firm...	
773.	I: Mmhmm	
774. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The manner of grieving as personal</li> </ul>	P: ... has been me gradually learning how to rebuild the connection with my emotional experience and I still don't find it easy... I find it easy where everything is going my way, but... at times of pressure, emotional pressure... the... you know this incredibly powerful reaction which, it's a steam roller. You know, it's very difficult to do anything to slow it. What I can do is hold it once it's here	He chose to leave the law firm five years ago, when he began trying to reconnect with himself emotionally. He is able to do this when things are going well but in times of emotional pressure it is much more difficult

	and allow it to pass. But that's, that's... not... that's not ideal.	'steam roller' indicating how powerful and unstoppable this feels  An inability to feel fully at the emotional level was something that existed before the loss too
775.	I: Mm	
776.	P: And I hope I'll get to the point where it doesn't bother me anymore but at the moment...	
777.	I: ... but it still... it still remains a challenge?	
778.	P: Mmhmm... it does, yeah I mean I, with this girl, erm, I've met... it's been very emotional... it's been wonderful and I haven't met anyone on that... I've felt like that about for 6 or 7 years. And erm, if ever, actually and... you know... the first bit of adversity we came across	This difficult with connecting emotionally in times of distress is experienced in other areas of his life such as in romantic relationships.

	<p>after sort of 7 or 8 weeks erm, I was terrified of it because my body was looking, or my psyche, whatever, was looking for signs of imperfection the whole time in order to make sure it was perfect and that I was certain about her and as soon as something happened where 'oh well that's something we need to overcome'... erm... my body reacted as though... really as though 'oh god.. erm... this is imperfect'. And there was a real sort of lock down before, I feel I almost can't feel at that point, is how it feels</p>	
779.	I: Ok... so sort of numbness?	
780.	<p>P: Yeah it is sort of feels like that but the feelings are there, it's almost like... I have a blind spot which increases to... so I can't see the emotions but if its experienced, I've experienced it in therapy where my</p>	<p>There is a sense of the feeling being there but not being allowed to be felt or looked at or stayed with</p>



	current therapist has said 'ok let's just, if you will, let's just see what is there'	
781.	I: Mmm!	
782.	P: And the thing is... I can feel it	When he turns his attention to it he is able to feel what is there
783.	I: Can't?	
784.	P: CAN... yes, I CAN	
785.	I: Ok...	
786.	P: It's just my mind has to be led to it... in order to see it. And... see past that blind spot.	His mind needs to be led to it, to see the blind spot and notice what is there
787.	I: So something about bringing the attention back to yourself?	

788.	P: Yeah	
789.	I: Because I think you were describing something before about abandoning yourself in a way, in these situations and...	
790.	P: A fleeing, yeah	He feels he flees from his emotional experience
791.	I: Yeah, like a fleeing, and, and... that... that numbness you can make sense of it if you pay attention to it	
792.	P: Yes	
793.	I: So there is feeling in there, it's just a matter of really...	
794.	P: Right... and it's not numbness... the numbness is the refusing to see it. It's the refusing to engage.	The feelings are there

795.	I: But actually there's a lot there?	
796.	P: Yes it's all there	
797.	I: Ok	
798. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: feeling disconnected from one's experience</li> </ul>	P: But I'm also terrified of it which is why, why I also have this reaction. And of course it self-fulfils itself... it fuels itself because... if you dislocate from your experience that is frightening cos you can't, you can't judge things and you don't know quite where you are and... something traumatic is happening cos most of the time I'm living perfectly well with my emotional life and I've come to really rely on what I'm hearing and suddenly it's taken away from you and I can't feel for this girl, in this case. That's terri... for me that's frightening. Erm, because I feel, erm, broken in a sense or I fear I'm broken. And I fear I'll never be rid of it, which then fuels	Dislocating from his experience distances him further and further from it. He becomes less able to judge his experience or where he is with it. In times of emotional distress he doubts himself and is unable to feel anymore, leading him to feel broken. Loss of his father was very much characterized by this feeling of being disconnected.  Disruption of the personal world

	<p>the fire of the... the cycle so... and, yeah... so going back you know I think about what happened with the loss of my, my dad... I can't see how that couldn't be part of my journey you know, to, to that... to that feeling I've just described and that reaction and not just a part of it but a very big piece of that.</p>	
799.	I: Uhuh...	
800.	<p>P: And... exploration of... erm... yeah... what emotional pain means to me. Why I then choose to... flee, you know or do whatever I'm doing.</p>	<p>He is interested in why he flees from emotional pain</p>
801.	<p>I: Ok so there's a connection there between what was going on with your experience of your dad passing away and that sort of emotional sense of feeling</p>	

802.	P: Yeah, yeah... that's... you know I can only, I can only summise really you know... but that is how I see it	
803.	I: That's how it feels?	
804.	P: It feels right to me and I... I don't throw that around you know. Erm, and I've, obviously I've lived my life and erm... for me to say that feels like, feels right as in it's very big part of that, I take this meaning it is. Erm, yeah...	
805.	I: So that sort of ... that sense of that immediate response in a way is, you say stayed with you for 6 to 7 years...and well I just... I'm wondering what it's like for you to tell me now cos you're sort of retelling it and I wonder what that's like...	

806.	P: Erm... yeah... there's um, there's two things that spring straight to mind. The first is I came into the room with a little bit of the numbness we're talking about because of my ... well it's because of my romantic situation right now... I... there is concern that it's not going as I want it to so I'm carrying that...	He began the interview with an emotional numbness owing to his current romantic situation
807.	I: So you're in that place that you sort of just described?	
808.	P: Yes	
809.	I: Ok	
810. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as ongoing</li> <li>Tuning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	P: And so... how do I feel about now retelling my, the tale of my Dad's death erm... there's a numbness.  There's a numbness, and... at the same time I've felt relief. Erm... yes there's a general numbness but I felt relief at certain times at certain parts of the story and	Feels some numbness in talking about his father but also some relief when there are moments of understanding his experience

	erm. And helping myself understand some of why I am feeling like I am now has brought a sense of relief.	It is important to feel and to understand the experience  Understanding of self
811.	I: Ok so something about... making sense of it right this moment is allowing you to connect with it?	
812.	P: Hmm... yes.	
813.	I: Ok so, so there's still a sort of a, a fleeing but also an engaging which is going on	
814.	P: Yeah	
815.	I: As you're in this room at the moment	

816.	P: And very much in my life, around this room, yeah yeah.. because I have this reaction.. erm, and as I said the reaction feeds on the reaction.	
817.	I: Mm	
818.	P: So... and what I used to do is I used to bolt down that road, you know I used to go down there very, very quickly and before you knew it I was extremely far away from my experience and I wouldn't deal with that probably for a few months until there was a bout of depression or something similar	He used to flee into this place of disconnection very quickly, leaving him very far from his experience, which would continue for a number of months until he would start to feel depressed
819.	I: Mmhmm	
820.	P: And then I worked through that and I've... at some point it would lift. I've learnt that's not the best thing for me, so... I'm trying... I try now with mixed success to not	When he reaches this low point he would then begin to work through it and with awareness he is better able to slow down



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater/ongoing self-understanding following loss</li> </ul>	<p>panic and not feed it. And allow myself to relax as soon as... it's a bit like the contraction of a muscle, just allow it to... open up again and then you get the opposite cycle and you get the positive feeling and 'oh I am ok'... and hope floods in and I get energised by that. In the past it's felt a bit like I... a little bit like I imagine a bipolar person would feel in that I... really swing and it can be quite quick between the two. Now I try not to react to the, that feeling of uplifting and just take it as part of this, this process I go through</p>	<p>the process and thus not further it. By relaxing and allowing himself to notice the experience, hope floods in. Feelings on either end of this are quite extreme and as happening quickly, and is likened to experience of bipolar. Awareness helps him not to react as much.</p> <p>Greater self awareness</p>
821.	I: So by staying with it...	
822.	P: I try to...	
823.	I: It sort of changes the process?	
824.	P: Yes, yes it does	

825.	I: Ok... and... you sort of touched on this in some ways but ... what in this time did you find consoling, if anything?	
826.	P: Back, when my Dad died?	
827.	I: Yeah	
828.	P: Well I know I buried myself in looking out for my mom's interests and erm... you know I would be the one who told her that she was being angry or told her that she couldn't talk to my brother like that because it was pushing him away and she really needed to see his daughter... at that time that was something that gave her a lot of joy... so I'd be very much the parent. And, with, with... a parent who hasn't been that great for me I	Looking out for his mother was a distraction in that it kept him from his own experience, but it wasn't comforting, as such.

	<p>don't think, you know... so that's that's been difficult...</p> <p>so it wasn't that wasn't consolation</p>	
829.	I: Yeah	
830.	<p>P: But it was erm... it was a distraction. And how could you say, how could one say that wasn't a good thing to help your mother out when she's bereaved. It's an easy one to defy</p>	<p>It was not that it was a bad thing to do, but it distracted him from his experience.</p>
831.	<p>I: So there's a bit of a dilemma there as well because it's not something that you... I think you said earlier that you don't regret it but it wasn't the best thing for...</p>	
832.	<p>P: Yeah it certainly wasn't the best thing for me and I don't regret it in that all my experiences brought me to here and I am kind of proud of myself. Erm, and I don't know whether I... I could have saved mom's life, I don't</p>	<p>Distraction by looking after his mother was not the best thing for him but he does not regret it because through the experience he has come to where he is and he is</p>

	know... I don't know... er, if I had my time again which is slightly different than regretting, if I had my time again I would do it differently.	pleased and proud with that. He doesn't regret how he was but would do it differently given the chance.
833.	I: Ok, and how would you do it?	
834.	P: Erm, I'd really look out for me, a lot more and it might mean I didn't look out... I might look out for mom the same amount but I would do it in a different way. I was so accessible for her...	He would do things differently by looking out for himself more. He wouldn't be less available to his mother but he would do it in a different way.
835.	I: Ok so what, what...	
836.	P: And mom's quite needy... you know... anyway... so...	
837.	I: Oh ok...	
838.	P: She took a lot... she took a lot.	

839.	I: So, so... what, what might that have looked like in terms of... so I can get a sense of what you needed...	
840. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needing to be open about all aspects of experience</li></ul>	P: Yeah... erm... well I would have needed to, to not look so strong all the time. Erm,	<p>If he could do it differently, he would allow himself not to look so strong all the time.</p> <p>He would allow himself to feel his feelings properly and this is viewed as a 'better' way of grieving, for him</p> <p>It is important to experience grief fully/grieve fully</p> <p>Be open about one's experience</p>
841.	I: Ok	

842.  • Turning away from the pain of grief	P: [slight pause]... yeah somebody to recognise that I wasn't as strong as I portrayed myself to be and acted how it was for me. And erm, I was, at that time I would have, I would have been very poor at allowing somebody behind the veneer of me being all concrete.	He was not honest with his experience and would not have allowed anyone to see the veneer of being concrete  'Concrete' indicating a lack of humanness and softness.  'Veneer' indicating that the façade was thin, and just beneath is a very different experience
843.	I: So you, so you were quite defended at the time?	
844.	P: Yeah massively	
845.	I: ...but in hindsight you would have been quite open to someone recognising that?	
846.	P: With hindsight...	

847.	I: Right, but not at the time.	
848. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	P: I don't think so and I wou... I was... you know you said that... you said defended. I was defended against myself as well. So I wasn't letting myself see my own weaknesses. So what chance does somebody else get to penetrate that... very, very difficult for them and...	He was distanced from his own experience and from himself, not looking at his weaknesses, making it impossible to another person to get to the real experience
849.	I: Ok...	
850.	P: ...I would have had a whole strategy of keeping people away. Cos I... I see it in others now and I recognise myself in others as I was... yeah... cos I'm, I'm bright and I'm sensitive and... yeah I was clever with how I constructed my existence you know and what was around me, I really did.	He would hold people at a distance to prevent them from entering into the side of himself that he was turning away from  Turning away from aspects of self/experience

		Bad faith or inauthenticity
851.	I: Ok...	
852. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of support from partner/family in the experience of grief</li> </ul>	P: And at the same time the people who would have been able to step into that potentially were in the same situation as me you know... I was single so there wasn't a romantic partner and mom wasn't allowing me... you know... and my brothers were fighting their own battles	<p>The people who might have been able to enter into that space were having their own experience of being bereaved, and he didn't have a romantic partner so there was not anyone else who could get close enough to see behind the veneer</p> <p>People identified as being close were immediate family and a partner, if there had been one</p> <p>Importance of partner/family/significant others in the process of grieving</p>



		Importance of being open about experience with self and others
853.	I: So in that situation you became the person who was doing the looking after at the expense of yourself in a way	
854. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of concern for others who were bereaved</li> <li>• Seeking a spiritual connection following loss</li> <li>• Change of worldview following loss</li> </ul>	P: Yes, with mom for sure... and she had a hell of a year... mean she... we had a Labrador who died that year as well... which was very much... represented Dad for all of us but particularly mom because they were inseparable. You know... and, and then Mom got shingles as well... very badly... erm... there was just... yeah I remember I didn't believe in God at the time but I remember just saying 'Please God... leave her alone'. I remember that, very, very clearly... She was battered.	Deep sense of love and care for his mother. Also a deep sense of duty, which has changed now.  Some engagement with the spiritual dimension in seeking God  Change in worldview

	<p>She was absolutely battered. We were brought up with a real sense of duty and erm... you know, you look after your parents and your parents do a great job for you. That was very much in the household and... so erm, I don't actually think like that so much now.</p>	
855.	I: Mm	
856.	<p>P: I certainly did then... yeah so I, I ... I did everything I could and I used to drive. I bought a car er, a nice flash car... some of it was retail therapy but the excuse for it was to get down to mom and I did</p>	<p>He bought a car to facilitate getting to his mother to spend time with her.</p> <p>Looking after others</p> <p>Concern for others</p>
857.	I: Ok, still very much in that mode.	

858.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfort in shared experience</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah. And we rotated, us three boys rotated in our visits to mom so that she got, you know we all got... we each went out kind of every third week or it might have been every fourth. Erm, and so we didn't really see each other. That was one problem.</p>	<p>The brothers took it in turns to see their mother but this meant that they didn't get to see each other. Seeing each other would have been positive</p> <p>Support or comfort in shared experience</p>
859.		I: Ok	
860.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comfort in shared experience</li> <li>Importance of family in providing support</li> </ul>	<p>P: That's one thing we've all said we'd changed cos... we needed one another</p>	<p>He and his brothers feel they needed to spend time together more during that time</p> <p>Support or comfort in shared experience</p> <p>Importance of support from partner/family</p>
861.		I: Yeah	

862.	P: We were sharing our experience as near as anyone was	Their experience was seen to be as close as one could get to understanding how the other felt
863.	I: Yeah and I guess... this is something you touched on but there's a mixed feeling around what it was like to be around other people. Can you talk to me about that?	
864.	P: Yeah I... two memories that were just coming back to me before you said that	
865.	I: Sure...	
866.	P: Which are relevant... erm... I went... I have a very close university crowd and... sort of ten of us.... And erm... and we went out for a night that had been organised, which we did at the time it was like a... we'd all go out and gather from around the country and... I	He met with very close friends from university for a gathering about a month after his father's death.

	don't know how long after dad's death this one was but it was like a month or something...	
867.	I: Ok...	
868. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disruption of the personal world: losing awareness of self</li> <li>Awareness of the effect of grief on others</li> </ul>	P: And I remember saying afterwards what a rubbish night it had been and people weren't entering into spirit. And somebody said to me that... 'Oh we were all really worried about you'... so I don't know how I'd been acting. But the point I guess I'm trying to make is... everyone else was aware of it but I wasn't... I was trying to, I was trying to be business as usual.	<p>He remembers feeling it wasn't a good night out and when he expressed this, he was told that the others had been worried for him. This drew his attention to the way that he had not been aware of himself in some way, but that those around him were.</p> <p>Others could see what he couldn't</p> <p>Disruption of the personal world, not aware of himself</p>

869.	I: So in fact that... that I think... when I said the defending and you said defending against yourself, it wasn't... it was actually quite transparent? People could see that you weren't ok?	
870.	P: Yeah maybe... maybe... yeah... I had... that wouldn't surprise me no, knowing what I know now	
871.	I: Ok, do you have a sense of what it was like, I mean there's some... from what I'm hearing there's times when you felt supported... when you were travelling back and making arrangements.	
872.	P: Yeah, yeah... immediately I was, yeah	

873.	I: And then there's other times I'm hearing something about being very sort of... detached or separate from...	
874. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... well with all bereavement I think, the people who are closest to the death, it stays with them a long time. But people who are close to people who are close to the death, even though they may think about it after a month or two, people forget the quality of what death actually does to people	Others who are not as closely affected to the loss move on much quicker, leaving those who are bereaved behind  Existential isolation
875.	I: Hmm	
876. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of isolation in the experience of loss</li> <li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li> </ul>	P: And so... yeah, you, you, you go a few months past and the world seems like it never happened.	After a few months the world has appeared to move on

877.	I: And as you mentioned as an example was your work place	
878.	P: Yeah... you feel destroyed erm...	He felt destroyed  'You' perhaps to distance himself from his experience
879.	I: So, and I suppose you have... you said you were postponing the feeling so... I wonder whether at some point you started to feel it and people have stopped thinking about it?	
880.	P: Yeah, yeah... and... I guess by postponing I was trying to banish it	
881.	I: Banish it...	



882. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Turning away from the pain of grief</li></ul>	P: Yeah it wasn't like 'oh I'll feel about this later'... I think it probably was when I was coming back but after the funeral you know, it, it was, it was my way of dealing with it. It wasn't... you know... it wasn't 'oh I'll deal with this in the Autumn' or something...	Turning away from the full experience was not a conscious decision but something seemed to happen on its own
883.	I: Yeah	
884.	P: But yeah you're right... erm... I don't know when it quite came out I was very depressed at the end of that year	
885.	I: Oh...	
886. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Loss leading to depression</li></ul>	P: Very depressed and just... you know disinterested.  Erm, and it was the, the year that England won the rugby world cup and I really like rugby. I can remember,	This turning away from his experience eventually lead to depression  Lack of feeling, vitality

	I was watching with family and I can remember not being...	
887.	I: Hmm	
888.  Greater/ongoing understanding of self-following loss	P: ...not being interested and... I was right in the middle of, of a... my... what I think was my first proper depression. I had a couple after then and... I haven't had one for years because I've learned to change some of my way of being.	This was his first episode of depression.  He has had further episodes but not for some years since he has changed some of his ways of being  Self understanding, transformation, post traumatic growth
889.	I: Ok	
890.  • Feelings of despair following loss	P: Yeah... yeah. Erm.... And it was actually, it was actually work that gave me the confidence to get out of that depression actually. Erm, cos I'd become very	He had become depressed and isolated, felt grey

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling alone in one's experience</li> </ul>	isolated and... going through the motions of life. Erm, looking back to that period it just felt very grey	Existential isolation  Despair
891.	I: Mm	
892.	P: Coming into that Winter I found really difficult and... somebody at work who generally was the... it was a boss... it wasn't good for me but... he threw me something that was difficult to deal with and... I raised to it. I don't know quite why I did but I, I did, and er... it got me moving in a different direction and I gained some confidence and I think I enjoyed... I enjoyed the fact that I was able to do something	Re-engaging in a difficult project at work and being successful at it was helpful. Felt enjoyment at this feeling of being able to do something.  Moving out of depression as he re-engaged with life and experienced enjoyment/pleasure
893.	I: And you were enjoying again?	
894.	P: Yeah there were some things... so the energy kind of started to flow a little bit. I mean I wouldn't have been	Re-engaging made him feel alive again

	rubbing my hands with glee going 'I've got more work to do' but it was... I was alive.	Meaning in being productive, achieving, re-engaging
895.	I: Ok, yeah	
896.	P: I think...	
897.	I: ...You were feeling...	
898.	P: I guess I was...	
899.	I: Or maybe not?	
900.	P: No, I guess I was, because erm... I think that's what I... what I associate with the energy beginning to flow again and being alive. It was something was happening.	
901.	I: Ok...	
902.	P: Erm... yeah...	

903.	I: Ok... I wonder how you were enabled to sort of accommodate that pain... I wonder whether this is something about sort of pushing it off and that was the way you accommodated it? Or tried to banish it rather?	
904.	P: Is it possible to explain that again?	
905.	I: Yeah, sure... I suppose I'm wondering how you managed to get through each day with this feeling that you're describing of really being quite depressed? And yet still managing to accommodate that pain and on some level move through that grief	
906.	P: Yeah... I don't know, is the short answer. But I think, it would have been about that... the blind spot I was talking about	The pain was in the blank spot
907.	I: Ok...	

<p>908.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as physical</li> <li>• Turning away from the pain of grief</li> </ul>	<p>P: Yeah, it would have been blanking out the pain. And yes the pain is still there and it's still hurting me but it's not hurting me directly. It's flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like I would have had erm... physically I would have aches, I would have slept badly, I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin. Erm, very shallow experience in terms of erm... yeah there's, there's no depth on my view of life. Yeah engagement with it so if I went out for night out, for example, it would have been... yeah, not memorable. Not really lived.</p>	<p>When he was turned away from the pain it was still there. It was there but he wasn't meeting it. It manifested physically in the form of aches, adrenalin, poor sleep.</p> <p>He was not present in what he was doing, not fully experiencing anything that he did. There was a sense of no really 'living'</p> <p>Grief as physical</p> <p>Turning away – inauthentic, bad faith</p>
<p>909.</p>	<p>I: You... said something about saying a quick prayer for your mom.</p>	

910.	P: Yes	
911.	I: What role, if any, did your religious and spiritual beliefs play in this experience?	
912. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss leading to an enriched spiritual world</li> </ul>	P: Erm.... Well I was agnostic before. Brought up Christian but I had found my own way to agnosticism and... erm... spiritually I deadened but it I, I think... and so... I'd already made choices that had led me towards protecting myself emotionally, spiritually from reality. My own experience, let's put it that way. Erm, and then we talked about my emotional life around my dad... the spirituality was also blocked off by that. The reason I say that with some confidence is, in my almost, rebuilding myself... in the last few, four five years, when I've accessed my spiritual.... my emotional life, my spiritual	<p>He was brought up a Christian and found his way to agnosticism. He experienced not only an emotional block but also a spiritual, seeing them as connected with one another. In the building back of his life and the reconnection with his emotional life over the past few years, there has been a rebuilding of his spiritual world.</p> <p>There is growth following loss</p>

	life has been there with it, so they kind of almost come as a pair. For me.	Spiritual life blocked and then grows after loss
913.	I: Ok	
914. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	P: Erm... and you know it's almost like erm, and I'm not the first to say this but the emotions are the, almost the discussion between the spiritual and the physical in a way. Emotion is almost the way of communicating between the two. Erm, and I... yeah... for those at least those 6 years from my dad's death to me starting to turn the corner back to having a relationship with my emotions, a conscious one... erm, yeah it was, I didn't have a view on anything, you know like... I didn't have a political view, I didn't... I didn't know what my ethics were. I had some rules that I'd acquired from other people but it was all about erm... external verification for	He understands his emotions as a conversation between the physical and the spiritual worlds.  It was approximately 6 years after the loss of his father that he began to reconnect with his emotions. Until this time he had not deliberated over his views or engaged with his ethics in a personal manner  Previously been a part of the 'They'  Spiritual dimension had not developed



	me... at the time it was about 'what would other people think, what's the social norm?' So I, within that... my spirituality didn't have a voice.	
915.	I: Ok	
916. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Loss as transformative to the self and worldview</li></ul>	P: You know... and erm, which is very different to the life I live, I live now. Erm...	He is different now  Changed after loss
917.	I: Ok, and so it's changed now? Can I just check that you're alright or if you'd like a break?	
918.	P: Yeah, I am ok, thank you. Yes	

919.	I: Ok... and so that changed then? Where you became more spiritual as you connected with your emotional side? Is that, is that what you're saying?	
920.	P: Just, say that again please...	
921.	I: You sort of went back to having a faith as you connected more with your emotional life?	
922. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to development of the spiritual dimension</li> </ul>	P: Erm... not a, not a faith as such, erm... I've explored Buddhism very conscientiously over the last few years but it's more... if I have a faith it's in... that I feel something spiritually, and I don't understand it, but it's something that feels like it's connected to something bigger than me.	There is a sense of spirituality which has grown out of his loss, and which is not understood as a faith but a belief is something greater than himself. Explored Buddhism  Growth on spiritual dimension
923.	I: Ok...	

924.	P: So that, that's spirituality, as far as I'm concerned	
925.	I: Yes, that's your spirituality yeah... and, and	
926.	P: But it's not faith... I wouldn't, you know... it's a loaded term isn't it? Yeah	His spirituality is not a faith
927.	I: Ok... erm, and, and what role would you say that this has played in the experience of losing your father?	
928.	P: I didn't have erm, you know I really was without a spiritual anchor. I was easily blown around, erm, by...	He was without a spiritual anchor. Sense of not being grounded
929.	I: Ok, and...	
930.	P: ...by circumstance	
931.	I: And would you say that's different now?	
932.	P: Yes, very much so...	

933.	I: Ok can you say how?	
934. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	P: I think spiritual anchor is quite a helpful term for me... yeah I don't get blown around so much now like even in emotional difficulties... like I do have some of those right now at the moment so I, as I said erm... I'd say I know who I am and I'm very definite in, yeah... what, what my priorities are and my sense of right and wrong and my sense of meaning in the world. Erm, that's all very clear to me and it's not clear as in I could write it all down but to the extent I don't know, I'm clear I don't know.	Having a spiritual anchor has allowed him to be more grounded, less blown around by circumstance. He has engaged and consciously chosen his worldview.  He is living more authentically now
935.	I: Ok... yeah	
936.	P: Yeah... and... yeah	
937.	I: Ok, so and I think you've actually begun to talk about this but... what's with me at the moment is, erm... in	

	what way would you say that you've changed as a person? I think you've sort of been talking about that but...	
938.	P: In, er... connecting it to the death of my dad?	
939.	I: To the loss of your father	
940. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dealing with traumatic loss in a similar way to other negative life experiences</li> </ul>	P: Well... erm, yeah some repetition here but... it's kind of been peppered throughout the conversation hasn't it so I think... yeah the circumstances of his death and the fact of his death exaggerated tendencies that were already within me	The loss exaggerated tendencies that were already within him
941.	I: Right	
942.	P: And, and... yeah exaggerated them significantly.	
943.	I: Yeah	

944.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to an initial disengagement with life</li> </ul>	<p>P: And... a part of that was closing to my spiritual and emotional lives, and having closed I went a long way, for 6 or 7 years without, as I see it... living as me. I was obviously alive I was existing but I wasn't, like I can barely remember those years. Like if somebody says erm, 'do you remember that wedding in such and such a year?' I can remember that but if somebody says 'what happened in that 6 or 7 years?' I really struggle.</p>	<p>It closed his spiritual and emotional world for as long as 6 or 7 years. This is to the extent that those years are blurry and he cannot remember much about them</p> <p>Personal and spiritual worlds disrupted</p>
945.		I: Mmm	
946.		P: And I kind of almost have to map it very erm, artificially.	
947.		I: Ok	

948.	P: By working out what happened, not remembering it.  So, erm... yeah so I was very changed in that sense and not, yeah not living, I mean I was... my life was very narrow.	There was a sense of not truly living or engaging, during the years that followed his father's death
949.	I: Ok	
950.  • Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life	P: And, and I was still maintaining the idea that I was successful and yeah... but I was very unhappy, very unhappy. So, erm... why 6 or 7 and not longer is I... I realised at some level that I was, something has to change. My romantic life kind of, erm, brought it to a head. That is important to me and I couldn't escape that so easily. You know when you're entering relationships with people it's far harder to hide than if you're just going back to an empty flat. You actually choose who you are... and you've got to make some decisions around er,	He was successful but unhappy. He was forced to address this because of his romantic life and the fact that being in a relationship made it harder to hide. He had to look at himself more and be aware of himself and choose how to be each day  Sought out MBCT  A more authentic existence. Making decisions about how to be

	<p>yeah who you are that day and so on. Erm, so yeah tendencies were exaggerated and things reached a head. And I, I started to make decisions to change my attitude in life and at the beginning I didn't know what I was doing and I explored a lot of different things. I did some mindfulness based cognitive therapy</p>	Importance of professional assistance
951.	I: Mmhmm	
<p>952.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-defining identity after loss</li> <li>• Need to integrate loss/re-structure identity/narrative/worldview</li> <li>• Search for meaning following loss</li> </ul>	<p>P: And a couple of caring friends led me to my own existential therapist which has set me on the path of getting here, to the New School and erm, I read. You know, bit of self help, a bit of religion, a bit of philosophy and erm, changed my job and er... just a whole load of</p>	<p>He was led to an existential therapist and this led him to change his career. He has read self help books, religion, philosophy</p> <p>He is changed by the loss</p> <p>Engaging in a more meaningful way</p> <p>More authentic living</p>



953.	I: Lots of changes	
954. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-defining identity after loss</li> <li>• Need to integrate loss/re-structure identity/narrative/worldview</li> </ul>	P: Oh a whole host and yeah I mean now, I'm changing careers and erm...	He is changing career  Very significant changes following loss
955.	I: Yeah you said you were hoping to hear from a job	
956.	P: Yeah, erm... and you know I hope to become a psychotherapist and an existential coach	Plans to become a psychotherapist and existential coach
957.	I: Mmm	
958.	P: Erm, yeah, few changes and for somebody who lived a very conservative life because of my wish to protect myself emotionally, it can be, it can be difficult to be out	The transition is a difficult but purposeful one. He is not able to rely on the external

	there not earning and... it is difficult, not can be, it is difficult for me.	(job, etc) to keep him away from his emotions  More authentic
959.	I: Mmm	
960. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life</li></ul>	P: Er, but erm, part of what has changed is for me is erm, yeah I want, I wanna live life and, and... hugely into authenticity and all its different meanings, you know, and... and sincerity, how I engage with what life's about and... that's really, that's really important to me...	Very important to live meaningfully and authentically. Important to be true to his existence
961.	I: A re-evaluation...	
962.	P: Yeah huge... and it's so existential, it's so existential	Existential re-evaluation following loss
963.	I: Yeah	

964.	P: Erm I mean, I kind of, you know my therapy... now I've found a good therapist, a guy... I lost my initial one, she went back to America unfortunately and she was great	He has found a new therapist with whom he is happy
965.	I: Mm	
966.	P: But you know I will talk about something and it will soon get down to... it's just purely existential and that's why... the course, not just the course but the discipline, the school, just absolutely fascinates me and I get absolutely passionate about it because it's how I understand life. And it's how I understood life as a young boy.	Existential philosophy has successfully called him back to himself and has motivated him to live in a meaningful and authentic way. The philosophy resonates with him strongly  Meaning in existential philosophy
967.	I: So it makes sense to you	

968.	P: Yeah massively, you know I've always been aware that I would die and I was very worried about it as a child and you know... it's just... and I've always been aware of choice and responsibility. They're not new things for me	The themes of choice, responsibility, and finiteness have always been present in his life from early childhood
969.	I: Yeah I think that's been sort of a theme in much of what you've talked about in terms of responsibility	
970. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to a re-discovery of self</li> </ul>	P: Yeah, yeah so I feel I've refound myself.	Re-discovered himself  More connected
971.	I: Yeah	
972. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-engaging with the world in a more meaningful way</li> </ul>	P: And my values and then who I am and I'm doing a lot of things I used to do like I've started playing... I used to play chess and cricket very seriously when I was a child and... I stopped both of them for the same reason which	Living life in a different way now. Allows himself to enjoy the things he used to

	<p>was I took them too seriously and they became, yeah I defined myself by my ability and... [unclear]... but I've started doing those things again because I want to do them not because they're important in how good I am.</p>	<p>enjoy but which he used to take seriously, and which would bolster his sense of self.</p> <p>Living life differently, engaging, living more meaningfully</p>
973.	<p>I: So you're engaging in a totally different way now?</p>	
974.	<p>P: Yeah and... I don't, I'm not successful at it all the time because I can come out of that mode and I might find myself being too competitive or, you know just putting energy into the wrong thing but generally</p>	<p>He is not always successful in living in this new way but moves in and out of it.</p> <p>Moments of authenticity and slipping back into older ways</p> <p>Overall more conscious of self</p>
975.	<p>I: Which brings us back to what you said in the very beginning which was that a lot of this is still a challenge but something which you are engaging with</p>	

<p>976.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to transformation of self</li> </ul>	<p>P: It is a challenge... but yeah... just what else can I do... it's a bit, you know I've... I've seen the error of my ways and so I'm left with that.</p>	<p>He has seen the error of his ways and therefore cannot turn away from it.</p> <p>New worldview</p>
<p>977.</p>	<p>I: Mm</p>	
<p>978.</p>	<p>P: And well what do I do? Do I... I can't pretend as I did, I can't do that anymore that's not open to me, so... do I kind of limp along or do I really try and rise to the challenge of overcoming this. It's a bit like having erm, yeah a disability or something you know, where... you know somebody's had their arm, second time I've mentioned things happening to legs but erm, yeah you get something that makes you unable to run say and, say you're limping and well what do you do? You know</p>	<p>It is not possible to live inauthentically anymore because he has a different view of the world and of himself following his experience. It is no longer possible to unknow what he knows. He chooses to confront it</p>

	I'd want to get out there and make the best of it because the alternative is worse, simply.	
979.	I: Yeah	
980. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grieving a lost self</li> </ul>	P: And this is ... or maybe I'm emotionally a little bit, damaged? Or... different? Whatever word I want to give there but I... I'm not as I was when I was a child. I was free flowing in who I was. I'm not. I'm trying to understand myself enough to kind of straighten out the kinks a little bit but they're never, they're never gonna be straight as they were. That's not how it works I don't think.	He sees himself a somewhat emotionally damaged now. Emotion doesn't come freely in the way that it did when he was a child and he doesn't see himself as being able to return to that way of being  Worldview changes following loss
981.	I: Cos you don't go back to being the same?	
982.	P: You make the best, and, and... it could be, maybe it could be better but probably not, erm, because I	

	believed we're, we've evolved to be amazing [slight laughter] you know, and work perfectly.	
983.	I: Hmm	
984. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss forces a confrontation with the reality of life</li> <li>• Relationships with others are enriched</li> <li>• A more authentic engagement with life</li> </ul>	P: And... and, yeah you mess with that by trauma and by choices around experiences and... you lose that natural... naturalness. And, be [unclear]... and it's given me a huge appreciation of other people's difficulties and just what happens in life that... I don't think I would change... cos er, that for me feels very real. Very, you know I, I was in, I tried to build the ivory tower for myself and I lived in it	<p>The naturalness of human nature is compromised by trauma and life experience. His own experience of this has given him great appreciation of other people's difficulties and he sees this as a positive change.</p> <p>'tried to build the ivory tower' suggesting that his previous manner of being was not realistic, real, authentic</p>



		An acceptance of the human condition and suffering which can't be turned away from
985.	I: Mm	
986. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Re-engaging in life in a more meaningful way</li> </ul>	P: And... and the thought of living my life like that now... it doesn't seem like a life to me. Something's missing and so a bit of grit... like the [volunteering] this afternoon... I think I need to be near it.	There is a need to be connected with the realness and the messiness of life  Volunteers at the Samaritans  'grit' indicating the realness of life but which is somehow healthy/providing opportunity for growth and honest living  Engaging in meaningful activity/volunteering following loss

987.	I: Yeah ok... yeah. Is there anything [name] that hasn't come up which you thought would? Or which feels important for you to say about your experience?	
988.	P: Very little... there was, there's one memory that I had which didn't fit into	
989.	I: Ok... would you like to share it?	
990. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as interpersonal: comfort in shared experience</li> <li>Importance of support from partner/family in the experience of grief</li> </ul>	P: Yeah it was me and my elder brother sorting out, Dad had a business he was an architect so he'd had a, started a business down in [county] and erm, you know we, we had some wine there and it's a very strong memory of him and I being on the floor of my dad's study, and papers around and... and we were both laughing and crying at what we're doing. It's just a very strong memory for me	He has a memory of being with his brother, drinking wine and sitting on the floor of their father's office, going through his papers. Laughing and crying.  Sharing in experience as comforting

991.	I: Hmm	
992.	<p>P: Cos you're in everything with Dad... he was... I haven't really talked too much about him I suppose.</p> <p>Yeah he was erm, he was an unusual man and erm, had a very childish sense of humour and... so his study was full of little things that</p>	<p>Recalls his father as being unusual with a childish sense of humour, his study was full of things he found amusing</p>
993.	I: Yeah	
994.	<p>P: ...he found amusing and... so you're... there and you're kind of, you're in his space and er, where he died as well... he died in that room</p>	<p>They were in his room, going through things of his and being where he has also died.</p>
995.	I: Oh ok	
996.	P: Yeah so I mean, the word surreal is overused but it is	

997.	I: Yeah	
998.	P: Cos we would have found things funny that he'd put somewhere and... but he's not there and...	
999.	I: Yeah	
1000. • Grief as interpersonal	P: So we laughed and we cried.	They laughed and cried and shared the experience  Grief is interpersonal
1001.	I: It sounds like you were real and connected in that moment	
1002. • Grief as interpersonal	P: Yes, right, exactly... what I was gonna say was that's mourning properly, as it were... properly is not a good word but that was mourning.	In these moments he was connected with his feelings and this felt to him like 'proper grieving'

1003.	I: That's what you were talking about when you said you wish...	
1004. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as interpersonal</li> <li>• Comfort in shared experience</li> <li>• Grief as relational</li> </ul>	P: Yeah... that was grieving and we were doing it together	They grieved together  Comfort in shared experience  Grief is interpersonal and needs a relational home
1005.	I: And with your brother and you said you'd wished you seen more of them	
1006. <p>Comfort in engaging in activities that were shared with the lost one</p>	P: Yeah... erm, and at some point I, I've gotta say I did pretty well around the funeral as well I was probably the [unclear]... and I cried a lot at the funeral and... me and my dad erm, shared the [town], erm, he was, he loved walking and... he got me into it and I loved it too, still do... and erm, he... Dad was somebody who kind of	He was able to cry a lot at the funeral. He shared a love for walking, as his father did. His father, like him, was emotionally reserved.

	hinted at the beginning but he held himself hugely in reserve, hugely... emotionally. He had a difficult upbringing in some ways himself, er... and we've all learnt to do that so he has this... [slight laughter]	
1007.	I: Yeah	
1008.	P: Yeah it's kinda like, we have the legacy. And er, [smiling] he went and left us with it a little bit but erm, yeah so... the point I was saying was erm, when he was in the [town] he was able to be free. Freer. And he'd laugh a little bit more readily and it wouldn't be so thought about what he was, how he presented himself	When they were in a different town where they would walk a lot, his father was more emotionally free. He would laugh more readily and wasn't so controlled in how he presented himself
1009.	I: Ok...	
1010.	P: Er, so at the funeral, we'd been invited to read something, you know like er, I forget the name... the	The mention of the town, which represented his father, triggered a very

	<p>tribute... eulogy... and er, we all said no, very wisely. So it was just the minister... said he'd read some cards out and the first card was from somebody who he also used to walk, walk with Dad and er, the first line was erm, 'we had many wonderful days in the [town]' and at the time the [town] represented dad for me you know big time... and I just... I just sobbed. Just really sobbed.</p>	<p>strong emotional response which led him to sob at the funeral.</p> <p>What represented his father strongly triggered the grief in him</p>
1011.	I: Yeah	
1012.	<p>P: Yeah... so we're talking about kind of, that early grieving and yeah I think I did grieve while I was down in [county]. Yeah... easier with people as you say...</p>	<p>He felt he was able to grieve in the early stages when he was with the people he was closest to</p>
1013.	I: Ok...	

1014. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as inter personal</li> <li>• Grief as relational</li> <li>• The importance of support from partner/family</li> </ul>	P: You know, like with my brothers... but then you come... I came back and it... very disconnected from yeah that experience. That situation.	When he returned back to his life, away from family and the family home, he became disconnected from his experience  Grief as interpersonal  The importance of family
1015.	I: Ok. I'm aware of the time. And I don't want to keep you but is there anything else that you want to add or...?	
1016.	P: Nothing I want to add. I want to give you the opportunity, I'm not, I'm not in a rush... give you the opportunity to ask anything else you'd like to...	
1017.	I: Ok, no I think that... I think I'm happy to leave it where we are if you feel that there's nothing else that you want to say.	



1018.	P: No, I'm happy thank you	
1019.	I: Ok, erm, shall we start doing a debrief then?	
1020.	P: Yes, yeah	
1021.	I: So that you sort of know where we are with things.	
1022.	P: Absolutely	
1023.	I: Ok, so I will give you this as well but it's just to sort of... in fact would you like to read it again? And then sign it... The main things are that I will delete the recordings 6 months later, and the consent and er, the the written transcripts 5 years later. And that you can still write to me and say that you want to withdraw from the study. Erm, I have attached there a list of places that you can go to if you felt that you wanted to speak to someone more in a sort of therapeutic setting. Erm, And	

	I think that's, that's more or less everything but if you would just like to sign for me there	
1024.	P: Yes [reading and signing]... great	
1025.	I: Ok and then there's a little card for you in there for you as well just to say thank you... and you can have that folder if you want to put it all in there.	
1026.	P: Yeah I will thank you	
1027.	I: Do you feel happy for me to turn the recorders off?	
1028.	P: I do, at your leisure yeah	

#### 40.8 Appendix 8: Summary table of themes

Master theme: Sub theme	Emergent Themes	Page: Section Number	Quote/Keywords
<b>Traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience: psychological responses</b>  <b>(Cognitive, emotions, perceptual)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cognitive: amnesia following realisation of loss (1)</li> </ul>	17: 137	‘... she said ‘No, erm, he’s gone’... and... and... I can’t remember what happened after that on the call.’

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive: disjointed memory following loss (2)</li> </ul>	19: 148	'yeah some of it's a blur, some of it's really clear. It's, it's kind of one or the other'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptual: a sense of not being in-sync with the surroundings (2)</li> </ul>	30: 216	Yeah just erm... I was behind what was happening. I was... in terms of reaction times'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptual: the feeling of being outside one's body (1)</li> </ul>	30/31: 218	'Life seemed to be erm, like a TV show that I was in and I wasn't....it wasn't really computing erm, I felt very estranged from my experience and almost erm, yeah catching up.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotions: loss being met with a sense of the full grief response being held off (1)</li> </ul>	21: 156	'You know... erm... but very aware of the holding back... of whatever my experience was going to be'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotions: turning away from the pain of grief (6)</li> </ul>	26: 192	'...this is speculation in a way but I, I suspect I can't remember because I wasn't

			allowing myself, you know, to absorb information... ’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotions: feelings of regret (2)</li> </ul>	12: 103 & 105	‘deciding to be that kind of father... ...and very much present, was part of what didn’t allow himself the nourishment which may have allowed him to live a bit longer’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of guilt and responsibility around loss (1)</li> </ul>	12: 103	‘ ...he sacrificed himself hugely in providing for us... and I. I think that was partly responsible for his death’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotions: feelings of love and concern for others who were bereaved (1)</li> </ul>	52: 340	‘... and, and then Mom got shingles as well... very badly... erm... there was just... yeah I remember I didn’t believe in God at the time but I remember just saying ‘Please God... leave her alone’

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of despair</li> </ul>	56: 376	'I'd become very isolated and... going through the motions of life. Erm, looking back to that period it just felt very grey'
<b>Traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience: physical manifestations of grief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased adrenalin (1)</li> </ul>	61: 394	'It's flowing out into all sorts of different parts of me like... I would have erm... been very much working on adrenalin.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief gives aches (1)</li> </ul>	61: 394	'... physically I would have aches'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief affects sleep (1)</li> </ul>	61: 394	'...I would have slept badly...'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Heart pumping (1)</li> </ul>	34: 236	'... I have an incredibly physical reaction so adrenalin, heart pumping...'
<b>Traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience: behavioural manifestations of grief</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behavioural: inability/difficulty crying (1)</li> </ul>	27: 195	'Erm, but my, you know that... that wasn't.... I didn't cry much'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behavioural: crying (4)</li> </ul>	78: 492	'...and I cried a lot at the funeral and...'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss leading to an initial disengagement with life (1)</li> </ul>	67: 430	'I was obviously alive I was existing but I wasn't, like I can barely remember those years.'

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as disabling (1)</li> </ul>	35: 240	'...this was like the biggest impact I can imagine besides me losing my legs or something...'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as all-encompassing: difficulty in doing other things (3)</li> </ul>	33: 232	'...the mind just isn't getting traction on what needs to be done and what's going on...'
<b>Traumatic bereavement as having a significant relational component: importance of a continued relationship with the lost one</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of relationship prior to death (2)</li> </ul>	11: 103	'[sigh] it's worth saying I was extremely close to him.'



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meaning found in honouring the lost one (1)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	18: 141	‘And... so just... down on my stomach and [the tattoo], it’s a Chinese symbol for [...] and it’s very private... nobody knows what it means unless I tell them and.. yeah... at the time it seemed, it seemed really appropriate. Erm... and yeah it's nice cos people ask and I can say... I can mention him...’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort in engaging in activities that were shared with the lost one (1)</li> </ul>	78: 492	‘...erm, he was, he loved walking and... he got me into it and I loved it too, still do... and erm...’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering/clinging to belongings of the loved one (1)</li> </ul>	75: 475	‘... we had some wine there and it’s a very strong memory of him and I being on the floor of my dad’s study, and papers around and... and we were both laughing and crying at what we’re doing.
<b>Traumatic bereavement as having a significant</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imposed time-frame for grief as unhelpful (2)</li> </ul>	31: 222 and 32: 224	‘I’m struggling at work and... they were, having been great, were really

<b>relational component: feelings of alienation experienced as a disruption of the social dimension</b>			quite poor then, er... it was business as usual very quickly...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grief as idiosyncratic (1)</li> </ul>	75: 476	'How er, how I mourned Dad... was, wasn't... there's no right way but it wasn't the best way for me. I er...'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Concern for the wellbeing of others who were bereaved as disruption (3)</li> </ul>	29: 210	'I took on the mantle of, of kind of filling that vacuum that Dad had left Mom. And I'm not sure I regret it but what it did was it meant I was looking. I was kind of suffering vicariously on Mom's behalf and not really looking at myself and what I needed.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the effect of grief on others (1)</li> </ul>	55: 354	'But the point I guess I'm trying to make is... everyone else was aware of

			it but I wasn't... I was trying to, I was trying to be business as usual.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needing to be open about all aspects of experience (1)</li> </ul>	49: 326	'Yeah... erm... well I would have needed to, to not look so strong all the time.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dealing with traumatic loss in a similar way to other difficult feelings (1)</li> </ul>	66: 426	'...yeah the circumstances of his death and the fact of his death exaggerated tendencies that were already within me.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling alone in one's experience of loss (3)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	56: 360	'But people who are close to people who are close to the death, even though they may think about it after a month or two, people forget the quality of what death actually does to people'
<b>Traumatic bereavement having a holistic impact on lived experience: the social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of being with the emotional needs of the bereaved (1)</li> </ul>	23: 170	... he's somebody who doesn't really talk very much and I remember him... he did not stop talking. So he was kind of complicit in the suspension... You know... it wasn't about... he was keeping me active...'

<b>dimensions assisting in living with traumatic bereavement</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comfort in shared experience (4)</li> </ul>	75: 475	‘... we had some wine there and it’s a very strong memory of him and I being on the floor of my dad’s study, and papers around and... and we were both laughing and crying at what we’re doing.’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical assistance experienced as positive support (2)</li> </ul>	28: 204	‘... sorted out my train fare and so on and they did a really good job and [employers] also helped the police find me they’d been... kind of... really amazing about it actually.’
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of family in providing support (5)</li> </ul>	53: 344 & 346	‘Erm, and so we didn’t really see each other. That was one problem [...] That’s one thing we’ve all said we’d changed cos... we needed one another’

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grief as interpersonal/relational (4)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	26: 192	'... got off the train and my mom and my elder brother were there and I, I sobbed. I sobbed and mom sobbed. I couldn't help it at that point'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire/need to talk about/share admiration of the loved one</li> </ul>	12: 103	'Erm, and somebody who certainly loved unconditionally and, and lived through us in many ways. Erm, perhaps to too great an extent...'
<b>Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement: loss of world order</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings of meaninglessness/absurdity in the loss (1)</li> </ul>	14: 113	'Erm, so it... he jogged... and he'd been very happy the few days before and... certainly as mom would describe it [slight laughter].'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss forces a confrontation with the reality of life (1)</li> </ul>	74: 470	'... you know I, I was in, I tried to build the ivory tower for myself and I lived in it'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of understanding what happened in the process</li> </ul>	14: 115	'...the doctor had said he, he hit his head... and he had a cut, but it hadn't bled. Which, I dont know the doctor

	of sense-making/moving through grief (1)		said that means he was, his heart had stopped, which makes some sense. Erm, so I suspect he didn't know a great deal about it, erm...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the fragility of life (1)</li> </ul>	11: 101	'I meditate and, and last year I'd... I'd done a few things that led me to meditate a bit more on death and impermanence and fragility and yeah... dad comes up in that...'
<b>Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement: integration leading to transformation of self</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grieving a lost self (1)</li> </ul>	73: 466	'... or maybe I'm emotionally a little bit, damaged? Or... different? Whatever word I want to give there but I... I'm not as I was when I was a child.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Need to integrate loss and re-structure identity/narrative/worldview (2)</li> </ul>	68: 438	'You know, bit of self-help, a bit of religion, a bit of philosophy and erm,

			changed my job and er... just a whole load of...'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater/ongoing self-understanding following loss (2)</li> </ul>	46: 306	'I've learnt that's not the best thing for me, so... I'm trying... I try now with mixed success to not panic and not feed it.'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved self-esteem following loss (1)</li> </ul>	37: 252	'I was, as I see it now looking back... emotionally, erm... well incredibly insecure. Er, and... hurt, I imagine. Erm, and so I, I surrounded myself with erm... things that I thought had value in that... like... a big pay cheque, I kept myself incredibly fit... Erm... yeah the status of the legal career. Erm, like... hobbies like sailing and skiing and...'
<b>Reconstructing a meaningful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships with others are enriched (1)</li> </ul>	22: 168	We stayed in a hotel in [location] just for a few hours and then [name] one of

<b>life after traumatic bereavement: re-engaging with the world in a more meaningful way following traumatic loss</b>			the guys, who I'm very close with, far more now than I was then
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater compassion (1)</li> </ul>	74: 470	'... and it's given me a huge appreciation of other people's difficulties and just what happens in life that...'
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life (4)</li> </ul>	70: 446	'... part of what has changed is for me is erm, yeah I want, I wanna live life and, and... hugely into authenticity and all its different meanings, you know'
<b>Reconstructing a meaningful life after traumatic bereavement:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeking a spiritual connection following loss (1)</li> </ul>	52: 340	'... yeah I remember I didn't believe in God at the time but I remember just saying 'Please God... leave her alone'. I remember that, very, very clearly...



<b>engagement with spirituality</b>			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrichment of the spiritual world</li> </ul>	62: 398	<p>‘...Erm, and then we talked about my emotional life around my dad... the spirituality was also blocked off by that. The reason I say that with some confidence is, in my almost, rebuilding myself... in the last few, four five years, when I’ve accessed my spiritual.... my emotional life, my spiritual life has been there with it, so they kind of almost come as a pair.’</p>

## 40.9 Appendix 9: Master table of themes

### MASTER THEME: TRAUMATIC BEREAVEMENT AS HAVING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF LIVED EXPERIENCE

		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	Total
<b>SUB THEME: SIGNIFICANT PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO GRIEF</b>									
<b>Super-ordinate themes</b>	<b>Emergent themes</b>								
Psychological response - emotions	Loss eliciting maternal instinct (for surviving children)			2		3			5
Psychological response - emotions	A need to confront/feel the pain of grief		1	3		5		1	10
Psychological response - emotions	Turning away from the pain of grief	9	3	2	6		3		23
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of failure as a parent			2					2
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of shame (over the wish to die)			1					1
Psychological response - emotions	Feeling emotionally detached from the experience/emotional numbness		1						1
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of betrayal following loss		3					1	4
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of abandonment							2	2
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of emotional vulnerability	1							1
Psychological response - emotions	Loss leading to feelings of ambivalence: love, anger, compassion, abandonment, and empathy							1	1
Psychological response - emotions	Suicide leading to the questioning of love (trust)							1	1
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of fear					1			1
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of regret	3	5	1	2	1	1		13
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of anger	1	1	7			1	5	15
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of guilt/responsibility	1	1	4	1		2	1	10
Psychological response - emotions	Feelings of love and concern (for lost one and survivors)		3		1	1			5
Psychological response - emotions	The death of a loved one as more difficult to confront than one's own death					2	1		3
Psychological response - emotions (shock)	A degree of shock is ongoing in the experience of grief		2	1		1		4	8
Psychological response - emotional numbing (shock)	Shock as postponing the full grief response							1	1
Psychological response - emotional numbing (shock)	Loss leading to feelings of shock/numbness	2	2			11	1		16
Psychological response - emotional numbing (shock)	Numbing associated with shock as self-preserving			5					5
Psychological response - emotional numbing (shock)	Shock as protection							1	1

		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	Total
SUB THEME: PHYSICAL MANIFESTATIONS OF GRIEF									
MASTER THEME : TRAUMATIC BEREAVEMENT LEADING TO A GRAPPLING WITH MEANING									
SUB THEME: LOSS OF WORLD ORDER		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	TOTAL
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Feelings of despair/loss of hope			4	1	2	1	2	10
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Living with a strong desire to die			1					1
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Choosing to live only for others			1					1
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Difficulty re-engaging in life without the lost one			1					1
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Loss leading to an initial disengagement with life				1				1
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Loss leading to an existential crisis						1		1
Loss of world order: loss of existential meaning	Loss leading to a loss of faith					5			5
Loss of world order	Assumptions about the safety of the world			4					
Loss of world order	A feeling that death spares noone					2			2
Loss of world order	An awareness of the fragility of life			2	1	12		3	18
Loss of world order	A sense of absurdity following loss/absurd following good times		5	1	1	4		4	15
Loss of world order	Loss of innocence		1			2			3
Loss of world order	Feelings of vulnerability/becoming more aware of the unsafety of the world		8			5		1	14
Loss of world order	Loss forces a confrontation with the reality of life (shattered assumptions)				1				1
Loss of world order	Feelings of anxiety (following loss of the assumptive world)		1						1
Loss of world order	Realisation of loss leading to panic						1		1
Loss of world order: search for meaning	The importance of understanding what happened in the process of moving through grief	5	7	1	1	2			16
Loss of world order: search for meaning	A need to make sense of the experience (reason for suicide)	1		1		1		1	4
Loss of world order: search for meaning	A sense of loss and a desire to find meaning in the experience			1					1
Total		16	13	7	3	19	2	4	52

		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	Total
SUB THEME: RE-CONSTRUCTING A MEANINGFUL LIFE AFTER LOSS									
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Re-engaging with life in a more meaningful way/need for more meaning	4		2		7		1	14
loss as transformative to self	Loss leads to taking greater responsibility (an authentic being-towards-death)					2		1	3
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Loss leading to a more authentic engagement with life				4		4		8
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Loss changes life				1				1
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Finding a purpose in life			2			5		7
Re-constructing a meaningful after loss	Giving back as a manner of finding purpose			4			1		5
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Loss leading to having a faith						3		3
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Loss leading to changes in understanding of spirituality					3			3
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Loss leading to change of life path	3		1				2	6
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Understanding of worldview is ongoing following traumatic loss		1						1
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Grief as ongoing	1		3	2	5	2		13
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Relationships with others are enriched			1	1	6			8
Re-constructing a meaningful life after loss	Traumatic bereavement leading to a fear of loss of other loved ones (being-towards-loss)		1			2			3
Re-constructing a meaningful life: new worldview	Loss leading to a new worldview						3		3
loss as transformative to self	Greater capacity for 'being-with' others following traumatic bereavement					1			1
Loss as compromising to self	Loss as damaging to every aspect of the self						1		1
Loss as compromising to self	Loss leading to a loss of self esteem	1		1				1	3
Loss as compromising to self	Traumatic loss as a threat to one's history		1						1
Loss as compromising to self	Grieving a lost self				1				1
Loss as compromising to self	Loss as breakdown of self						1		1
Loss as compromising to self	Loss of self resulting from loss			1					1
Loss as transformative to self	Moving through grief as re-learning the world							1	1
loss as transformative to self	Dislike of new sense of self			2					2
Loss as transformative to self	Accepting new self			3					3
loss as transformative to self	Loss leading to greater personal strength							2	2

[illegible]



SUB THEME: THE IMPORTANCE OF A CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LOVED ONE		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	TOTAL
Superordinate themes	Emergent Themes								
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Importance of relationship to loved one prior to death	2	4	3	2	1	1	1	14
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Seeking a continued relationship with the lost person	4	3	11		2	6	2	28
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Gathering/clinging to things related to the lost one	1		1	1			2	5
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Sense of presence as comforting	6				1	2		9
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Meaning found in honouring the lost one			4	1	5			10
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Impossibility of feeling anger towards the lost one			1					1
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Comfort from engaging in activities/places enjoyed/shared by/with the loved one	3		3	1			1	8
Importance of continued relationship with loved one	Loss eliciting maternal instinct			9					9
						Superordinate Total:			84
Other Themes Not Included									
		Yvonne	Lucky	Kay	Ben	Laura	Zoe	Sally	
Confrontation	Grieving a lost future	1					3	3	7
finding comfort amidst grief	Running and the outdoors as comforting								0
finding comfort amidst grief	A need for an outlet of loving feelings			1					1

## 40.10 Appendix 10: Interview debrief

### Interview Debrief

Aindri Jayasinghe  
New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC),  
258 Belsize Road,  
London  
NW6 4BT  
Email: traumaticbereavement@gmail.com

### **Living with Traumatic Bereavement: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Supervisor: Dr Chloe Paidoussis

Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research which forms part of my Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy (DCPsych). The purpose of the study is to understand what it is like to live through the experience of traumatic bereavement. The purpose of this interview was to try and understand what it was like for you to suddenly lose your loved one.

The next step for this study will be to transcribe and give further consideration to the information you have shared with me. Using your information and the information shared by other participants, I will try to understand and write a paper on the experience of living through a traumatic bereavement. I will write in general terms so your anonymity is preserved when the paper or article is published. If I use any excerpts from our interview, they too will be anonymised to preserve your confidentiality. In terms of keeping your information safe, I will now transfer this interview onto an encrypted hard drive and delete the recordings 6 months after the date of my graduation. I will keep the anonymised transcribed data for 5 years following completion of the research.

This study has been ethically approved by the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and Middlesex University Ethics Committee. If you are interested in reading more about this research, or if you have concerns or issues arising from the research or interview, do

feel free to contact me or my research supervisor. You may use the details provided on your participant information sheet to do so. As mentioned in the information sheet, you can withdraw from this study at any time without giving any explanation, and without any negative consequences.

While I hope that I have minimised any emotional distress to you, the sensitive nature of this topic means that you may feel some degree of distress during which you may still experience after the interview. I am attaching here a contact sheet which details where you may receive therapeutic assistance.

Thank you again for taking the time to contribute to this study. It is very much appreciated.

With best wishes,

Aindri Jayasinghe

## 40.11 Appendix 11: Contact sheet

### Contact Sheet

#### **British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)**

*The BACP is a professional body representing counselling and psychotherapy, working towards a better standard of therapeutic practice. You can search their website to find a therapist.*

Website: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>

Email: [bacp@bacp.co.uk](mailto:bacp@bacp.co.uk)

General Enquiries Telephone: 01455 883300

Postal Address: British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy  
BACP House, 15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17  
4HB, United Kingdom

#### **CRUSE Bereavement Care**

*CRUSE offers specialist website, telephone, email and face-to-face support for bereaved adults, children and young people.*

Website: <http://www.cruse.org.uk/>

Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

Telephone helpline: 0844 477 9400

#### **Samaritans**

*This is a general listening service (ie. not specific to bereavement). Samaritans provides 24 hour confidential emotional support.*

Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Telephone helpline: 08457 90 90 90

Postal Address: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, Chris, PO Box 90 90, Stirling,  
FK8 2SA



### **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide**

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide exists to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend. It is self-help organisation, in which many of the volunteers have themselves been bereaved by suicide.

Website: [www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)

Telephone helpline: 0844 561 6855 (open between 9am and 9pm)

Support by email: Contact Ann at [sobs.support@hotmail.com](mailto:sobs.support@hotmail.com)

### **The Compassionate Friends**

*TCF is a charitable organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents dedicated to the support and care of other bereaved parents, siblings, and grandparents who have suffered the death of a child/children.*

Website: <http://www.tcf.org.uk/>

Email: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)

Telephone: 0845 123 2304

### **United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)**

*The UKCP is a membership organisation which trained professionals register with. You can search their web site to find psychotherapists and psychotherapeutic counsellors who are accredited practitioners on the UKCP.*

Website: <http://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/>

Email: [info@ukcp.org.uk](mailto:info@ukcp.org.uk)

Main switchboard: 020 7014 9955